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THE REASON FOR LIVING

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ROBERT RUSSELL WICKS

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## THE REASON FOR LIVING



# THE REASON FOR LIVING

AN APPROACH TO THE PERSISTENT  
QUESTIONS OF LIFE

BY  
ROBERT RUSSELL WICKS

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, LTD., LONDON

1935

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## PREFACE

THIS book has come into being after its author has listened, over a period of ten years, to the questions of thousands of college students, both men and women. In individual conversations and in conference with groups of twenty-five or more, so chosen as to include the majority of one incoming class after another, a wide range of minds has been represented. The most persistent questions have been preserved, and, after being classified under the general topics most frequently discussed, are here given in representative, if not literal, form. They are not only typical of youth but give a cross section of the problems that trouble the rank and file of people in everyday life.

The material used in the answers is the result of repeated attempts, in private talks and public addresses, to state and restate the ideas until their expression seemed to find a response from the student's sense of reality. Whatever value the various answers may have in themselves, they at least suggest how one's thought is veritably pounded into shape by a bombardment of questions from minds unwilling to accept anything until it sounds real.

Since the argument of the book is intended for peo-

## P R E F A C E

ple who are more or less uncertain of their faith, and who, having lost hold of much that they had taken for granted, are beginning to cast about for convictions of their own, the method of presentation will seem vague to those who are already content with some fixed form of belief. *The author is seeking to furnish, not some complete and logically arranged scheme of thought, but rather the raw material out of which convictions can be formed.* Such interpretations as are suggested here should be taken only as hints to indicate directions where, as experience deepens, more and richer meanings may be found.

Emphasis needs to be laid on the fact that these chapters constitute an attempt at simplification. In these days when people are groping through confusion to reach some faith which might give meaning and worth to life, it is unfortunate that the most helpful and trenchant thinking is thus far contained in books which are not easy for the ordinary man to read. It is a problem to simplify this thought and put it into the vernacular without doing it injustice. After all, the mysteries of life and the universe cannot be reduced to simplicity; but at least some simple roads leading toward the deep places of truth can be so indicated that they will be safe to trust, provided the reader remembers he is on a road and not at the end of it.

With this purpose in view, all footnotes and refer-



## P R E F A C E

ences, which are the indispensable stock-in-trade of the scholar, have been omitted; technical language of every kind, old and new, has been abandoned in favor of the plain language of life; and the abundant illustrations have been purposely selected, not from the favorite haunts of the academic mind, but from the homely incidents that are the common stuff of the everyday world where we are all at home. The first portion of the book gathers together the material which goes into the making of the faith we live by, and the second part concerns itself with the problems which this faith confronts in daily life.

ROBERT RUSSELL WICKS,  
*Dean of the Chapel,  
Princeton University.*

Princeton, New Jersey.  
March, 1934.



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*PART 1*

*WHERE WE ALL BEGIN*

## FOREWORD

### Part I

*In the pages that follow, an attempt is made to bring together the familiar experiences which have lain at the root of man's most effective beliefs. Impressions are gradually accumulated from one area of life after another, so that they gather significance by lending support to each other in a growing awareness of what there is to believe. The movement is from the vague and impersonal toward the more definite, intimate, and personal facts of experience, intentionally stopping short of a formulated faith and so leaving the reader free to shape the gathered material into convictions of his own making.*

*The questions which recur most often in discussing these matters with young people are introduced here in italics to bring out, as they do in conversation, a point that needs to be made clear.*

## CHAPTER I

### WHY LIVE?

SOONER or later every man is tracked down by one persistent question, "What is the reason for living?" There are many things we want to know, but unless we understand some of the meaning of life itself, all other knowledge fails to satisfy. This problem is well stated in the words of a young man who was so in doubt about the purpose of everything that he felt it was useless to do anything at all. "The trouble with me is I have no reason for living. I see other young people who seem to exist without any reason. They simply desire to obtain work to earn money to buy things to have a good time. An aimless existence is fit for an animal, but a man needs a reason and I have none."

Some people attempt to dodge this issue. They choose a temporary end, work for that until it wears out, and then move on to other novelties, trying to live from hand to mouth. But the hunger for something that never fails is unappeased. However disguised, a series of failures makes a meaningless life which tempts the mind to thoughts of suicide. It is essential to know what gives life a meaning.

## WHY LIVE

### I. INADEQUATE REASONS

*Is the pursuit of happiness a sufficient reason for living?*

It is significant that, on this question, most Americans have never noticed the contrast between the Declaration of Independence and their religious tradition. The latter never proclaims any inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness. It reaches its climax in the personality of one who said, "To this end was I born, that I should bear witness to the truth." He had a hard time of it, but never once in his life did he insist on his inalienable right to be happy. This taking of life as a mission to represent what is real and show up what is unreal brought him enduring satisfaction, and has been the secret of all the creative lives that have made the world we live in. The right to the pursuit of happiness has turned out, again and again, to be the right of a man to make a fool of himself and be a tragic nuisance to his fellows.

This much overrated pursuit reminds one of a remark which an old Adirondack guide used to make when some newcomer asked about the fishing: "Well, the fishing is fine, but the catching is a little poor." The elusiveness of happiness, when pursued, has been the major note in all the pessimistic philosophies of history—a "striving after wind." There is so much that can interfere with catching and keeping happiness: a badly

## INADEQUATE REASONS

digested dinner, frayed nerves, or a change in the quotations in Wall Street. The record of the pursuit of happiness shows the lowest winning average of any human adventure. It has given us cynicism, which is just sourness toward a world that does not make you as happy as you think you should be. It has given us life's bitterest seasons of self-disgust. Raids on the public treasury that threaten a nation's financial stability are somebody's idea of the pursuit of happiness. This same pursuit accounts for the myriads of men and boys in our prisons. Politicians have illustrated for us what government of cities may look like when conducted as the pursuit of happiness. War and economic depression occur when separate nations insist on their several rights to be happy in their own way. When this pursuit comes in one door, art and science and excellence go out at the other. It is the fear of having our own happiness interfered with by some one pursuing his, that creates suspicion of all who might get in our way. This pursuit of happiness, as the end of life, has proved the most delusive enterprise on which our human race has ever set forth.

*Is "doing your duty" the only alternative to happiness?*

No; not as "duty" is popularly understood. We are apt to associate duty with having to do what we are not inclined to do. Sometimes that may be our duty, and any

## WHY LIVE

one who cannot manage himself on those occasions where he must grit his teeth on the unpleasant will never go far. But we do not live for these occasions,—they are like hills which must be climbed on a road that is taking us somewhere we want to go. We have a peculiar dislike for people who are doing good just because they feel it their duty to do so. Fancy visiting a friend in a hospital and saying, “You have no idea how I wanted to go fishing this afternoon, but I felt it was my duty to come here!” Such “duties” may have to be done and done as gracefully as possible, but real life cannot be lived constantly in this mood. Imagine Edison working in his laboratory, always with the dreary feeling that he must do what he disliked to do! Creative work is not done that way.

### 2. THE SUPREME REASON

*How does one find the chief reason for living?*

Of course our life begins with no reason at all. At first our daily round might be likened to the life history of the barnacle. This creature lives fastened to a rock or the bottom of a boat, inhabiting a cone-shaped shell which has a hole at the top and a little trap door which operates like the shutter of a camera. When submerged, the barnacle opens this door, stretches forth a waving arm with clutching fingers at the end, and grabs, grabs, grabs, for any chance morsel floating by. That grabbing

## THE SUPREME REASON

existence constitutes the biography of a barnacle. In much the same way we make our start in life. Fastened on a home, we live to gather in what we want, morning, noon and night, with no regard for the feelings of any one. Some of us have taken a long time to outgrow this infantile stage, and some never outgrow it. Indeed the world is full of human barnacles—politicians fastened on the ship of state, slowing all its progress while they do their grabbing, financial racketeers and exploiters and parasites of all kinds fastened on our business life with the grabbing hand tirelessly at work.

You can tell when a person really outgrows this childish stage when, out beyond anything which belongs to him, he finds some undertaking or cause of which he can say: "I belong to that." The more significant the enterprise, the happier a man is in belonging to it with all his heart and soul. The scientist, Einstein, writing on his philosophy of life, said that were it not for the joy of co-operating with kindred minds in the pursuit of the unattainable in science and art, his life would be empty. To him, a life of self-indulgence "seemed like imprisonment." The spirit of the true scientist in our day has revived for us the reason for living which has always satisfied man at his best: *to co-operate with other people to help something better become real.*

We were meant to be creative individuals, equipped to share in the creative activity which is ever unfolding

## WHY LIVE

the infinite possibilities of this universe. We belong in a vast procedure which is older than any of us, which utilizes all of us in a complex interrelationship, and which perpetually awakens us to the unexplored that has never entered the mind of man. Life becomes most meaningful when, in small opportunities or in high places, we are linked up with others to help that which is new and true and better to become real.

In one sense the final meaning of life can never be found, simply because more meaning is created as we advance. The significance of one's life seems to be inexhaustible, as its connections increase. To a rightly developing individual, the thrill of living is the continuous discovery of more that life might mean. It is tragedy when we so conduct ourselves that our existence becomes less meaningful with the years. A life of increasing surprise should be the aim of every one.

*How does one find what his own particular life can mean?*

This problem varies greatly with individuals. But the principle involved might be illustrated in a plan which a young man once followed to help him out of uncertainty. He first made a list of everything that he would like to do, from his recreations up to his fondest dreams. From this list he checked off the incidental items and others that were impossible or least attractive, until he



## THE SUPREME REASON

named four main interests which seemed to fit his nature. Then he made another list of things which were most needed in the world. Again he checked off items which were uncongenial or out of his sphere, until he concluded with three or four which roughly corresponded with his own bent. From that point he intended to go on talking with people, reading biographies of men who had worked along his prospective direction, bringing his studies into line and trying himself out in work.

In some such fashion do men find themselves. In each of us are all the elements of human nature, a little of the artist, mathematician, mechanic, explorer, craftsman, organizer, and so on all the way down to our animal instincts; but the combination of these elements is different in each of us. Our particular combination gives the bent to our life, and furnishes the drive of energy that makes us unique. To confine this nature for a lifetime in some activity that does not furnish it expression is sheer defeat, unless in some avocation one can find a chance to "be himself."

This attention to one's own nature, however, is not sufficient unless it is connected with the discovering attitude which expresses itself in the question: "What is wanted of me?" The question "What do I want?" taken alone has never discovered anyone's real destiny. Florence Nightingale lived in a home where she had everything she wanted, but only when she looked out at the

## WHY LIVE

desperate state of the nursing profession in her day and asked that question, "What is wanted of me?" did she discover who Florence Nightingale really could be.

If we are ever to approximate the discovery of what we were meant to be, it must be along the lines indicated above. To be sure, circumstances are all too often forcing people out of their true vocation. The selfishness of men and the blindness of parents may thwart a valuable life, and our whole social system, so long as it is based on the profit motive, will inevitably frustrate the development of millions of people whose genius is lost to the world in the sheer grind of making a living.

We are now entering an era when the waste of human resources in the endless enterprise of making mere things is on the conscience of the human race. Machines can take over much of the deadening labor from human shoulders and enable us to create more quickly all the things we need. Time will be available for giving expression to neglected abilities in myriads of people who are living under capacity. No civilization can survive that does not take advantage of this turn of events. In co-operative movements, in places of individual leadership, there is room for every one to assist in liberating man everywhere to discover himself. The chief danger is that many will rest content with the routine of a money-making existence and stop living with dormant powers still unrealized. Our world is much like the

## THE SIMPLE ESSENTIALS

little girl who fell out of bed in her sleep, and who, on being asked how it happened, replied: "I guess I went to sleep too near the place where I got in."

### 3. THE SIMPLE ESSENTIALS

*What possessions are required for the best life?*

This question has never been answered. We only know that some of the greatest lives have been lived with a minimum of possessions. In our own lives we can approach an answer to the question only when we first realize that the *essentials of life are simple*.

There is a perfectly plain reason why real life is simple. Our capacities are our only real possessions, and our real joy is in the exercise of our capacities. Tolstoy, in his essay on *Labor and Luxury*, reminds us that to be our complete selves we must enjoy four employments: employment of muscle in some hard labor; employment of fingers and hands in some form of skill; employment of the mind and imagination; and employment of the faculty of fellowship with people.

Complications begin with the things we attach to life. We need enough of these to develop our capacities, therefore the amount varies with individuals. The trouble is, few of us know where to stop. A true aristocracy of personal worth is always simple, whether it be rich or poor, but the false aristocracy of money has set among us an artificial pace. It seeks money enough to enjoy

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idleness and extravagance, the two deadliest foes of health and happiness. It desires wealth without work, and uses wealth to avoid work, as though there were some substitute for capacities whose use is our only joy. The world has been deceived by this nonsense over and over again; and nature ever steps in to enfeeble this softened life until it dwindles and loses its place in the rugged ongoing of the race. Such has been the "deceitfulness of riches."

Statistics have shown that the majority of persons whose lives have been of significance in America have come from simple homes with moderate incomes, intellectual interests, occupation in worthwhile tasks, responsibilities that all must share, and inexpensive recreations which develop the creative interests that no one can exhaust. It is in our homes, from the very beginning of life, that we must inculcate the great principle of simplicity—that our capacities are our real possessions and our real joy is in their exercise.

### 4. SHARABLE POSSESSIONS

*What is a man's life worth?*

It is worth what it has to share. Our civilization has drilled us in the idea that we are worth what we outwardly possess. That idea has been utterly exploded. We have learned, to our sorrow, that ability to accumulate possessions is not identical with great living. We

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know now that many people who possessed much were not worth much to society. As we read the lives of famous fortune makers, we are sure that our final admiration is not for the great competitors who were able to manipulate human needs for profit. The great men of this world have ever been the great sharers.

Here is a sample. The pioneer work in the X-ray in America was done by a man in a Massachusetts hospital, who gave all his spare time and money to his early experiments. He rose to the top of his profession and was sought everywhere. During the first years he received such serious burns that in after life he underwent over eighty operations to fight off death. After the last one, he went to France to help in the hospitals during the war. Warnings about his health made no impression upon him. In uniform he presented an odd appearance, and officers laughed at him; but he was not living for appearances. He found his way into hospitals and improved the efficiency of their X-ray machines until he became indispensable. And just before he died over there, they said that you would find him, late at night, surrounded by some of the best medical men and surgeons of the world who were drawing upon his inexhaustible knowledge and unfailing willingness to give himself. There was a man with sharable possessions.

With each of us there are these two kinds of possessions. The physical kind are exclusive. While we have

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them, no one else can share them, any more than our neighbors can share money we are saving or the clothes we have on our backs. But the possessions that belong to the spirit and mind of a man can belong to others even while he still retains them. The more Jane Addams shares her human interest in the people of the slums and spreads it through the world, the more she enjoys it herself. People with great ideas, with high qualities of character, with skill and insight and influence, can share these things without end. These possessions multiply one's connections with life around him, and help him belong permanently to the whole human movement, and through that to the endless creative work of which we human beings are a part.

One of our dramatists wrote a play to show that there were too many people in the world who wanted to express themselves but who had nothing to express that was worth sharing. How true! Too many people wanting to write, with nothing worth while to say! Too many wanting a position, with nothing to offer but their own desire for profit! It reminds one of the incident of the fox-terrier that entered the studio of a great electrical company, just when they had completed the first radio connection which enabled a voice to be carried around the world. The dog barked near the microphone, and immediately the sound producer repeated his bark, which had circled the earth. He barked again, and again and

again. There he was, in a connection that gave him access to the ears of the world, with nothing to offer but his desire to hear himself bark.

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When we arrive at the conviction that we were meant to live a creative life, using our capacities for interests that are sharable, we must recognize that we are only a small part of a great creative system. Since we are interconnected with it all, in everything we do, our beliefs concerning it will largely determine how we live.

This is why the discovery of a reason for living inevitably drives us on to the *old quest for something in which to believe*. Today, amid all the confusion of religious, scientific and philosophic opinions, we are under increasing pressure to believe something. There has been a popular notion that we could realize ourselves by believing in nothing and expressing our desires without restraint; but that has led to futility. Now the old truth is becoming plain—that we cannot express all there is in us until, in the encompassing mystery of the universe, we find what it is that is worth our devotion and around which we can organize our life.

We shall therefore proceed, in the chapters that follow, to accumulate facts and impressions which, taken all together, may show us what there is to believe, and thus reinforce our reason for living with convictions to live by.

## CHAPTER II

### CREATION'S WORKING SYSTEM

IN gathering impressions of a creative activity at work in the universe, it is important to recognize the rigidly impersonal arrangements by which creation proceeds. In any human enterprise like a printing press or a factory, much that is purely mechanical and automatic is required if any purpose is to be carried out. In the universe, this working system, which we did not invent, and with which we cannot tamper, is now, through scientific study, making a deeper and deeper impression upon us. Our beliefs become anæmic and sentimental whenever they trust mere feeling and lose contact with the facts of this law-abiding order. We will consider in this chapter some of the impersonal impressions of super-human activity on which we depend.

#### I. GIVEN RESOURCES

*Is science replacing help from "outside"?*

The scientific movement has given us new confidence that we can master nature for our own good, and this has led men to say that we expect no help from outside; but this is shallow thinking. It overlooks the great fact of "givenness"—the universe is full of given power, given resources, given conditions, given possibilities. Before we



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can think or act, before we can even exist, we must depend on what is already given.

There are, for instance, all the means for our physical life. We are forever taking advantage of resources beyond our own power. We do not swim across the Atlantic; we discover and utilize the steam power given in the nature of things. The farmer who plants his seed and waits for the harvest trusts in power that he does not possess. Physicians tell us that they cannot cure disease, or heal a wound; they prepare the way for healing forces that are given. All science is but an interpreter of that which is already there to be interpreted, reminding us of laws for which we never cast a vote. We conform to this order. We cannot make it conform to us. If we co-operate, we obtain life; if we do not, life ceases to be available. We do not judge the system of nature; the system judges us. On the physical side, we depend entirely on what is given.

So, too, the means of personal living are all given. Some one has said that this is a "personality making universe," no matter how indifferent it sometimes appears. Personality has at least evolved in this system as though the soil were right for it. If the conditions had not been given, personality would not have appeared. (Palm trees do not grow in Labrador.) But personality does appear, and is sustained and nurtured by conditions that are given. For its growth it requires the

## CREATION'S WORKING SYSTEM

co-operation of everything physical and non-physical. It takes the whole solar system to stretch and expand the minds of men. (We do not assume that this is what the solar system is for; we do not know what it is for.) We owe our personalities to the lives of others, to hills and mountains and sky and sea, stars and sunsets, and the beauty of flowers and trees. Nobody knows how much it takes to make a personality, but apparently it requires everything there is. This has been the basic insight of all religion that man is dependent upon "givenness" as the fundamental factor in all his living.

### *What is it all about?*

Of course we cannot know the ultimate purpose of everything. But for all practical purposes we do not need to know. It is enough to be certain that we are in the midst of and part of a process which began long before we appeared, and which is forever making new and greater things possible. Since our advent, in spite of all our foolishness and reluctance, the activity continues combining human energy and natural resources, organizing higher and higher forms of life. Various groups of experts have been used to reveal the details of the process.

### *Can science discover any purpose in all that is given?*

The best brains of the world, investigating in the realm of the physical and material, analyzing everything with

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ingenious instruments, fail to find a purpose unmistakably dominating the world of their researches.

We should have expected this all along. No investigation of physical and material things and processes could discover purpose, because those things have no purpose of their own. They might be used for a purpose, but they themselves possess none. Fancy trying to find a purpose in the complicated machines of a textile mill. Analyze that machinery until doomsday, and the more you take it apart the less purpose you will find there. From watching people using the machinery you might learn what machines were for, but no analysis of the machines would give that knowledge.

Suppose the best psychologists, together with the best surgeons, who at one time or another have examined every organ in the body, were to collaborate in a scientific analysis of Mr. Gandhi of India to discover the motive which rules him. Not the most thorough examination of glands and brain cells and nervous reactions could ever find out that he is animated by a love that carries the burden of three hundred million lives of his fellow men. Yet that love, which science could not discover, has been potent enough to advance a people's freedom against the heaviest odds. Science has plenty to do to help us find more and more resources which may be used for a good purpose. It can never discover the purpose of life.

## CREATION'S WORKING SYSTEM

### 2. INTERRELATEDNESS

#### *Why bother about a purpose in creation?*

We find ourselves involved in a process so vast that we must break it up into specialties to understand it. There is so much to know and do that we divide the field into smaller and smaller parts. This knowing more and more about smaller and smaller parts tends to make people judge life as though it could all be seen through their special knot-hole. All specialties in every sphere depend on some "altogetherness." As a profound thinker has put it, "our little one thing after another belongs in a great altogether," which far surpasses the comprehension of any one of us. Apart from that, overspecialization repeatedly fails us.

The head of a leading business school has claimed that narrow specialization explains the failure of business leadership since the War. He said, "It has been no one's business to consider things in their relations. Executives think first, last and nearly all the time of their concerns as isolated. They have fine understanding of their own companies and almost no grasp of the relation between their particular interest and the social consequences of their activities. The hard study of relations is not undertaken."

We neglect "altogetherness" and attend each to his own interest, and we land in frustration. In this curious

## INTERRELATEDNESS

"altogetherness" there is operative, over against us, something real that is mightier than man.

This reality comforts us as each one makes his special contribution, knowing that, in a better way than we could manage, it will be related to other contributions in the growing good. This is what gives us courage to step out from guarding each his private interest, to trust that "altogetherness" in which alone the welfare of all will be found. This is what gives the tremendous confidence that the organization of our life around an "altogetherness" will liberate resources and bring possibilities of living that are now beyond our fondest dreams. It is as though we were being held together in the grip of a great power, not ourselves, that makes for increasing mutual good.

*What can this "interrelatedness" add to our belief?*

It emphasizes the important fact that the superhuman activity in the universe acts *constantly* and not just *occasionally*. Thus it should further help us shift our minds from an unnatural to a natural thought of creative activity, operating so continuously that it becomes the life in which we live and move and have our being. This way of thinking about superhuman help will fit into and glorify the whole business of life, for it means that we are parts in a great system where creative influence is

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at work "constantly, not occasionally," to make all things work together in a natural scheme which includes everybody.

### 3. PRESSURE TOWARD THE IMPOSSIBLE

We are ever being manœuvred into places where we see the necessity of more that could be. It may be discouraging to discover how much is wrong with ourselves and the world, but there is something very marvellous about this pressure toward a higher life which makes us feel the wrong. Emerson once said: "Man may be base, but how do we know he is base?" That is the great mystery of our race. Our life is mysteriously and miraculously manœuvred to the point where we see the necessity of a better life beyond our reach.

#### *What keeps us aware of new possibilities?*

You know how a hive of bees can be manœuvred into doing far more than they would ever do by themselves alone, and this without forcing them, or interfering with the freedom of their nature. Plant a field of clover nearby, and light-colored honey will result. Should you put artificial honeycomb in small frames of a standard size, and insert them in the hive, the bees, instead of bothering to make their own comb, will use all their time to gather honey. They will no longer store their treasure in the hollow of an old tree, but will deliver their goods

## PRESSURE TOWARD THE IMPOSSIBLE

in neatly sealed, one-pound packages ready for the market. It is miraculous what a man can do by managing the life of a bee. It is even more miraculous the way our life is manœuvred so that we keep discovering the unaccomplished and are set struggling for something which we did not know we wanted and thought impossible.

The striking illustration of that is the way we are being ever driven today to expand our individual concern. Note, for instance, how the medical profession is being influenced against all resistance toward a new vision of their work for community health. In a certain town in the East, the citizens have experimented with a hospital association which charges its members five dollars each for one year, in return for which the members have all advantages of the hospital with its medical and surgical care short of a three-hundred-dollar limit—a case where a profession has been induced to see that sickness must change from an individual concern to a community responsibility.

Surely, also, the post-war depression manœuvred us into a position where we could see that prosperity and security cannot be had by one group at the expense of other groups. That must be an all-together concern. Thus, by some overruling of human freedom, we are everywhere being brought face to face with needs to which inertia and selfishness had made us blind. We

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are being taught to say with Victor Hugo: "The people are silence. I shall be the advocate of this silence. I will speak for the dumb. I will speak of the small to the great, and of the feeble to the strong. I will be the word of the people."

### 4. JUDGMENT

*Why can we not have our own way?*

There was once a small boy who said: "There is something in me that I cannot do what I want to with." Perpetually we come up against this obstinate way that is not our way. An English philosopher recently confessed, after a lifetime study of philosophy, that it dawned on him like a revelation that every philosophy ended in the same way—with an imperative. "Live this way and not that way." As he looked about him in the universe he found this "veiled imperative" emerging wherever he faced facts. We know what he means. Knowledge in all its branches is unmasking that veiled imperative "More life this way, not that way." Scientists, putting aside their own feelings and desires, are listening humbly to that imperative "More truth this way and not that." In every experiment of industry or politics or international affairs, and down to intimate details of personal adjustment to life, we run against this inescapable summons "Live this way, not that way." Everywhere our life is dependent on a way that is not our invention.



## JUDGMENT

"The real is not what we make, but what we find."

Here is where our man-centred generation is beginning to recognize an object, distinct from our own choice and desire. Here is one point where we meet what religion has meant by a higher than human will; not some fixed and published set of rules, imposed on us from heaven, but an influence and an arrangement confronting us constantly in the nature of things and in our own nature, eternally there, no matter what we think about it.

There is a story told of an engineer, just graduated from college, who, during the building of a famous bridge, pointed out to the chief engineer some mistake in the figuring of the strain on a certain part of the structure. The older man refused to take the correction seriously, assuming that the best brains had given him reliable figures. But when the construction reached the point where the mistake had been made in the reckoning, the bridge collapsed and fell into the river.

In some lines of life the consequences follow more slowly, but that judgment which discovers what is out of line with truth runs up through all levels of living. A modern writer has reminded us that while we are discussing right and wrong, the universe pays no attention. We may argue until we make white appear black, and set up our own standards. So long as we are merely talking, the universe is indifferent, but the moment we begin to act out our conclusions, reactions set in that

## CREATION'S WORKING SYSTEM

distinguish between the desirable and the undesirable. We must return to this point again, but we would stress here the impression of some arrangement of the order of life which *finds out* our mistakes.

It was Horace Bushnell who suggested this principle in his remark that we are punished not for our sins but by them, and rewarded not for our virtues but by them. In a selfish and physical direction we find less and less of what our life can be. In an unselfish and spiritual direction we find more and more of ourselves. Some habits contract our life, disintegrate our relations with others, and set our own instincts at war with each other. Other habits expand our life, bind us up in new relations with more and more lives and unite all our native forces in "one jet of life." However impersonal this seems, it is a beneficent scheme which is not of our planning, and which has a way of rescuing us from contentment with less life than might be ours. There is some relentless concern over the least thing that interferes with achieving the excellent.

Any one who has had the pleasure of making ship models will recall his boredom when some uncritical and nautically ignorant person makes meaningless effusions over the handiwork. How different one's eagerness to hear what an old sailor, who really knows a ship, might say about an error of rigging or a mistake in some detail. Here is searching, merciless detection of anything

## J U D G M E N T

less than the best, and all in the friendliest desire to help one achieve the perfect. Such judgment, really in earnest over perfection, may well be the very soul of kindness and love, and the best analogy we have of that activity in the universe which finds us out like a "relentless enemy of everything but the best."

## CHAPTER III

### THE APPEAL TO PERSONALITY

WE here turn from the impersonal impressions of the working system of creation to facts that suggest a more personal influence reaching and affecting our personality, as physical and mechanical action cannot do. Our life in this world has to do with two kinds of power. Besides the natural forces that do the physical things there are the influences that affect the spirits of men. In this chapter we will notice the striking contrast in our attitude toward these two sources of power.

Concerning the natural forces we feel that they are here for us to use. The spiritual influences make us feel that we are here for them to use. They exercise a mysterious claim upon us, which gives no reasons and brooks no argument. Here, instead of attending to forces that might serve our purpose, we become devoted to a purpose that commands our service. Instead of choosing what we desire, we find ourselves chosen and commandeered in a struggle from which it is cowardice to withdraw. We will consider some experiences in which, from different angles, such influences make contact with our lives.

## THE SECRET OF STABILITY

### I. THE SECRET OF STABILITY

#### *How does stability originate?*

It originates where we are claimed by some excellence which convinces us that we ought to be its instrument. We do not convince ourselves; the excellence convinces us. Self-interest may drive us thus toward the higher levels of life, but only after the highest has appealed to us as better than anything else, no matter what self-sacrifice it costs.

One of our novelists has drawn the picture of a young physician who went into a town as the assistant to the leading practitioner among the wealthy circles. His chief was also the head of the Board of Health. When the young man was given the work among the poor, he found that most of his cases came from unsanitary tenements owned by the clients of his colleague. Whenever he sought to make the conditions public, he was suppressed by his superior, lest the wealthy clients be offended. Whereupon he resigned his position as assistant, set up for himself, gathered citizens around him, and exposed the sources of disease. And the novelist sums up this man's character in these words: "Dr. Wolf was a man who could not bear not to know what could be known." He might have kept his eyes shut, but he would not.

That kind of appeal has all along turned men from

## THE APPEAL TO PERSONALITY

following the path of least resistance. It is the power which holds men in the direction of the hardest and the highest when they could have gone the other way. Pasteur, at forty-five, was a victim of paralysis. He might have quit, but he did not. Some devotion to the truth and the good of his fellows kept him at work, and he made most of his great discoveries as a crippled man. When Scott's expedition was returning on its fatal journey from the South Pole, there was the exhausted man who, knowing he was a hindrance to the party, walked off in a blizzard and never came back. He could have imposed on his fellows, but he would not. There was Luther, the Catholic monk, risking his life to protest against corruption in the church he loved. He could have kept still and escaped trouble, but he would not: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise." Nathan Hale could have been more safely interested in his country, but he would not shirk: "I only regret that I have but one life to give to my country."

All down the line, from pioneers and heroes to our intimate friends and parents and neighbors, there appears this indomitable power holding human life in the direction of the best. Realize, if you can, how much the whole course of progress in the universe has depended on this power working through all sorts and conditions of men. In the familiar experience of conscientiousness, honor, devotion, fidelity to truth, heroism, love and

## THE DEMAND FOR LOYALTY

enthusiasm for humanity, we meet the most determining influence we know anything about.

Stand apart and view our human lives awakened and caught up by this universal stimulus to express more and more of what is lovely and beautiful and true and excellent. We are not sufficient unto ourselves without this. Here is the great stimulating power that takes the initiative in all our advance and makes us feel that we belong to it. Socrates was referring to this influence when he said: "Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you." Jesus' reported words, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me," express the secret of his stability. Such lives have the heart of the matter in them. Their courage is the sort the world has hung upon, and they are likened unto a wise man "who built his house upon a rock."

### 2. THE DEMAND FOR LOYALTY

*Why assume there is one supreme loyalty?*

We have referred to this before. We think we know how to live by separate loyalties to our family, our friends, our work, our country. We forget that every such loyalty taken alone has failed us. We are like the woman who said, "I guess I know how to bring up children; haven't I lost thirteen?" Many of the worst tragedies in the world are the result of thinking we

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know how to live by loyalty to some limited human interest. Our loyalties have a curious way of depending on some higher loyalty, over and above them all.

By way of illustration, take what happened in a New England town. Seventy-five per cent of the veterans on the regular payroll of the town were hale and hearty gentlemen, who, on the side, were drawing a pension from the Federal Government. Not one of them had been hurt in the war, and only one of them was in poor health. Doctors and lawyers had perjured themselves to put these cases on the Federal pension list. The veterans and doctors and lawyers all thought that loyalty to the support of their families was enough. But if you should have many veterans like that and many doctors and lawyers like that, you would see that love for families alone may well bankrupt a nation. Besides devotion to families, these men needed to care for the nation on which their families depended; and beyond that, to face the larger human welfare on which the fate of all of us depends. Furthermore, each man needed loyalty to the best in himself. And a man can be true to the best in himself only where his devotion goes beyond pleasing any number of people and is given to some perfection which demands more of him than human beings expect or require.

At this point we are feeling our way again to some final devotion in which our souls find rest. These many



## THE LURE OF PERFECTION

interests that claim our loyalty, science, art, education, family, and country, prove harmful by themselves alone. They must be included in a vast movement toward greater good that binds together our various interests and endeavors in a unity of movement toward a goal of perfection that is far beyond our sight. We do not invent the movement, nor do we own or administer its procedure. We cannot simply lie down and use it as a benefit. We must give it our devotion lest we delay its progress and bring tragic results upon ourselves. Here again we are at the root of the old religious conviction that while there is much provided in the universe to use, there is also something like a purpose which we are to serve.

### 3. THE LURE OF PERFECTION

*Why be concerned with an impossible ideal?*

This question is raised very frankly in the famous utterance of Jesus: "Ye shall be perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect." What does he mean by confronting us with such an absolute claim? In an age of relativity, talk of absolute perfection sounds like nonsense. We have been warned against a New England conscience that sets up a fixed standard to which we must drive ourselves to conform. We are wary of extreme idealism because it pushes the ideal so far into the future that

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talk about it becomes sentimental, with little effect on action now.

As a matter of fact, Jesus is speaking here of an experience which is fundamental in everybody's life: the relentless attraction toward the perfect. Consider the significant confession of a leading woman athlete, who said that her escape from restlessness was in giving herself in some form of effort to work out the beauty of perfection. It was like religion to her. She was not content with being good enough to win and secure recognition, though she was spurred on by such motives; but beyond all requirements for success she felt that added attraction to work out the beauty of perfection.

That is the mystery in the life of every one of us, and it is what Jesus was talking about in his provoking utterance. He was forever beset by people who wanted to know how good you needed to be to be good enough. How many times should you forgive? How much better should you treat others than they have treated you? How far should you go with neighborliness and brotherliness and love? Jesus' answer to all that was right out of his own experience, as though he said: "That is not the way to think about it. I have found that there is no telling how much you may live. No matter how far you go, you will feel an attraction to discover the beauty of something more perfect." And he set down that experience in the stimulating sentence, "Ye shall be per-

## THE LURE OF PERFECTION

fect as your heavenly father is perfect." This relentless stimulus, which keeps us outgrowing ourselves, is the secret of all advance.

### *Is progress a foregone conclusion?*

No understanding of progress should lead us to think that we are riding on an escalator, called evolution, which will carry us upward whether or no. Human foolishness and inertia may involve us in set-backs and tragic relapses to barbaric levels. These set-backs may be final in the earthly life of individuals, and may cause nations to revert to dark ages from which the slow and painful ascent must be made all over again. By being unwise as groups, we may frustrate many of our possibilities as separate persons.

What we have tried to make plain is fundamental. We are bound together in an infinite procedure in which every end is but a beginning, every solution but an open door to new problems on a higher level, every truth a challenge of more truth to be known, and all improvement but a hint of more than has entered into the mind of man to conceive. No evil situation can be final. Wherever we are brought under this attraction to help evolve something more of this beauty of perfection, there Jesus would say we had felt the power of the Infinite. Our modern mind is beginning to understand him at this point.

## THE APPEAL TO PERSONALITY

### 4. THE STIMULUS TO ORIGINALITY

*Are not prudential reasons adequate for producing originality?*

The goodness that "pays" is the most common variety, but it is seldom original. More of our "virtue" than we realize is due to some selfish motive which we disguise, both from others and from ourselves, and it is as unoriginal as respectability. Prudential reasons may be responsible for some goodness, but not for originality.

Originality is one of the areas of living into which we can neither argue ourselves by reason, nor shove ourselves by selfishness. When any one tries to be original he produces no more than a strained peculiarity. One discovers how original and unique his personality can be only when he gives himself over to following out the beauty of perfection in some line of activity.

Recall Sir Walter Scott who, in his business relations, was partner in publishing concerns that failed and left him under an indebtedness of some half-million dollars. His recent biographer reminds us that Scott could legally have gone into bankruptcy, transferred the loss to his creditors, started life over and been like other ordinary men. But instead of being driven by self-interest into that path of least resistance, he allowed himself to be drawn toward the beauty of a life of perfect honor, so far as that was possible. "My own right hand shall pay

## THE DEMAND FOR CREATIVE WORK

my debt," he said; and for years after he labored with his pen, through lonely periods after his wife's death, through times of ill health,—writing, writing, doggedly writing, until he gave the world the *Waverly Novels* and paid his debt. While being captured by the beauty of perfection in the direction of honor, the originality of his personality was revealed. It all happened after he left behind consideration of how good he needed to be to meet the popular demand.

Down to the most humble levels of service, where we go beyond "what is needed to pass" and yield ourselves to the call of the perfect in any kind of work, we find a life which otherwise no one would have known was there to live. What religion calls devotion to God is akin to this experience.

### 5. THE DEMAND FOR CREATIVE WORK

*Is there a religious quality in creative activity?*

The more one mixes with honest people in these changing times, the more sure he is that each age has its peculiar process of generating the religious consciousness which really gears into what is happening at the time to make for change in the world. When such religious awareness begins to emerge, it is often not recognized as religion, except that it is the centre of transforming power.

Life today is appearing more and more as a demand

## THE APPEAL TO PERSONALITY

laid upon us for creative work that needs to be done. One observer interprets our present situation by saying: "The issue is one between destruction or creation." We must either go down with the order that has failed, or we must create a new one. That may be extreme, but certainly everywhere today there is the demand to create new and better ways of doing the work of the world,—in business, in the professions, and in all lines of endeavor. It is an infinite, universal demand,—tireless, inexplicable, unanswerable,—which seems to have a concern for every individual who can be utilized in the direction of expanding life.

In our day life often acquires a religious quality in some such unconventional manner as this. A man is attracted by the vision of a finer possibility that is waiting to be realized in some sphere of the world's work. His self-interest, uniting with the interest of others, is helping to drive him; and perhaps some great necessity, threatening every one, may be giving him determination. He becomes conscious of multitudes who do not care, but he knows the thing ought to be done, must be done, and some one must give himself to doing it. As he labors on, he finds that he has entered a fellowship of kindred souls, who in one place and another are dedicated to this task of making known more truth and establishing more adequate ways of life. He sees that this fellowship of the present is linked up to a fellowship

## THE DEMAND FOR CREATIVE WORK

of men in the past, who have labored and into whose labors he has entered. He refreshes his enthusiasm by renewing the memory of those who have suffered and given everything in the great cause. He summons the motive of gratitude to generate devotion. Almost unconsciously he feels that past and present workers are all united by a common spirit, in an enterprise that connects all the generations together in this unfailing struggle toward unexplored possibilities. It is as though all these different minds, thinking in their special ways, were sharing the thought of a mind greater and more far-reaching than all of them together.

That is the way multitudes are finding themselves bound together in a fellowship which has a religious quality. Names for this experience may differ, details will vary in individuals, but this basic experience is becoming a living bond, as religion ought to be, between men of all creeds and color the world over. Wherever any one sees his significance as an individual part of the great enterprise of creation, which conserves his contribution in an all-embracing movement toward more abundant life, there he finds the ancient religious source of courage, enthusiasm and undying hope.

It is said of a certain cathedral in this country that it was so built that none of its details would be alike. Each column in the nave stands at a slightly different angle from every other. Each pew-end has its unique design.

## THE APPEAL TO PERSONALITY

No two stones in wall or pavement are of the same size. The structure was to suggest how variety of parts could be built up together to make a beautiful whole. Certainly no design for a church could more truly suggest the religious feeling now appearing in a world where an infinite variety of personal activities are utilized in a growing structure of life, inspired and overruled by vastly more than the genius of man.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCERN FOR INDIVIDUALS

IN addition to the influences that appeal to personality, there is another fact which should become part of our belief: *each of us has a personal connection with the superhuman sources of life.* We will now turn to familiar experiences which create faith in this concern for individuals.

#### I. BY-PRODUCTS OF DEVOTION

*What is providential care?*

We were taught as children that God would take care of us, protect us from harm, save us, and deliver us from all fear. This simple faith is often rudely upset by the tragedies of life. The terrific injustices of our social order, and the apparent helplessness of religious forces in handling the economic distress of millions, have revealed the unreality of much sentimental trust in the providence of God; and, besides, there has been an increasing feeling that the universe is too big to be concerned with our personal wants.

It might assist us, in this confusion, to think that benefits reach us as the natural by-products of our devotion.

## CONCERN FOR INDIVIDUALS

*What did Jesus mean by his words, "Be not anxious"?*

There is always some abiding fact of life underlying every great utterance of the Master. And here it is the fact that the best in life comes as a by-product when our attention is directed elsewhere. "Which of you by being anxious, or taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature," said Jesus, in illustrating this point. Growth on all levels is a by-product. We attend to eating, sleeping, and expenditure of energy; and growth is added when we are not giving it a thought. There is always something that we do, and then much more that supplements what we do, fills in gaps and adds results by means that are out of our hands. Even an atheist, who has made a national reputation with his pen, acknowledged this marvellous supplementation. In writing about the worth of living, he said that when one can give his whole strength and attention to some good cause, he finds that all the rest of life automatically takes care of itself.

This trust in the by-products of life is sustained by all that psychology discovers. The best that happens in us is a by-product of our attention to something outside. If you ever become a parent and are called upon to quiet a crying child, your only hope is in the fine art of inventing attractions which will divert his mind from the feelings that worry him. The welcome silence is always a

## ATTENTION TO DETAILS

by-product which comes when attention has been drawn off by some fascinating object. We cannot stir up our own interests directly. We attend to something interesting and that produces an increasing degree of interest within us which we could not generate on demand.

All real release of life's varied energies is a matter of luring attention away from the energies, to interests farther and farther outside of us. Somehow that opens the way for important by-products without our being anxious about them. The best lives we know have developed by thus trusting some other agent to operate while they were not giving themselves a thought. This is an arrangement which is not our invention. This is part of what religion has called "providence."

### 2. ATTENTION TO DETAILS

*How can attention be given to each of us?*

One unquestionable fact should predispose us to the possibility of individual attention: this vast creation operates to recognize the most minute details. The revelations of the microscope are as amazing as the dimensions which we find through the telescope.

Jesus once remarked that "the hairs of your head are all numbered," and any one who studies the construction of a hair will find it as exquisitely fashioned as though it were the only one ever created. This care of the minute is not theory, but fact, and is beyond all power to de-

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scribe or conceive. No matter if we be told that light, travelling 180,000 miles a second, would take 300,000,000 years to reach us from the most distant cluster of stars now known to man, and that among the stars our world is as one grain of sand on the shores of the sea, still the minute attention to detail remains true.

We need not side with the modern cynic who wrote, "Help me, O God, to be resigned to be an atom." For how big should a man be, anyway, in order to register as a detail? Would he be any more significant if his brains were chambered in a head as big as the moon? One of the electrical geniuses of our generation had a body of dwarf dimensions, but he was more significant in his relations to the powers of the universe than the brawniest prize fighter or the biggest monstrosity in a circus. When it comes to creative activity like thinking and loving and influencing life, physical size is not the main question.

### *Is special attention necessary?*

If, as we have said, the giving of life through creative procedure is constant, we do not have to be remembered at some particular time. Certainly on the physical level we recognize that the forces of nature are connected with each of us all of the time. There is no need of some special providence to put them at our disposal. One of the leading physicians in America, who has performed

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hundreds of autopsies, claims that a large proportion of human ills are cured before the victims even knew they had the affliction. Proof was found to show that the healing forces had quietly done their work, without being specially called in.

This readiness of natural forces at the disposal of each of us is the most familiar fact of life. A yachtsman tells how he released a stranded boat from a sand bar. When he and his friends could not move the heavy boat, they called on nature for more than human power. They moored two rowboats, one on each side of the stranded vessel, and connected the two by a rope under the bow of the sloop. They next filled the rowboats with water until they were sunk to their gunwales, and then, tightening the rope, they bailed out the boats. As the water lifted them, they lifted the sloop until she was afloat. Despite the vastness of the universe, the forces of nature were ready and able to connect with that individual case of need.

We are not used to thinking this way about our connection with the spiritual forces of the universe. Our imagination has worked after the manner of a play called *The Man Who Played God*. The title came from the deaf man in the cast, who had learned to read people's lips as they talked. He lived on the top floor of a high apartment near Central Park in New York, where with a spyglass he could watch people on the park benches,

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and by reading their lips could tell what they were saying. When he found those who were in trouble, he would send his servant down to tell them that their problem was known and help would be sent. When asked where this mysterious kindness came from, the servant replied, "From the man who plays God." In our vast universe it is hard to imagine things done like that with each of us; but if creative influence can reach out to us constantly through natural channels, we can build up a new notion of the connection of individuals with the whole enterprise.

We must become used to this idea. The concern for individuals is not occasional, like human attention. It is constant; always offering the resources of the whole to each one and relating each one to the whole scheme.

### 3. RELIEF FROM ANXIETY

*Can we expect material favors to correspond to our deserts?*

In one sense everything material is given to man regardless of his merits. The whole order of life is absolutely trustworthy in its action for all men. That is an unspeakable blessing on which our existence and progress depend.

The natural order must proceed on its way without regard to our deserts. A singularly gifted young man is taking a sail in his twelve-foot boat, and the wind comes

up and sends him to his death, with no more respect for him than for the lowest bootlegger cruising in those waters. In individual cases this seems terrible, but, taken as a whole, it is well that nature is neutral, neither kind nor cruel, but operating with machine-like regularity. If electricity and steam would pull a train only when passengers were morally perfect, the traffic would not support the railroad. Science has shown that a trustworthy order of nature is far more providential than some arrangement which answers our conflicting desires for personal favors.

Jesus made up his mind to this fact at the opening of his ministry, when he said, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." He never tested providence by personal favors of prosperity or protection. He had no such favors. He was killed like a common thief, on a cross. He told his disciples that they need not be afraid of those who kill the body. His faith in God was not to be tested by special favors that interrupted the natural working of life.

*Is much talk about providential good fortune misleading?*

Yes. Some people's good fortune is far from providential; it may be the result of cruel injustice and not the by-product of a high devotion. Common sense no longer interprets the distribution of material favors and protec-

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tion as the sure mark of the hand of providence. No sensible man supposes that the rewards paid to some of our financial racketeers and popular athletes are a proof that providence considered them of more worth to the human race than the great men who served humanity with no eye on the purse. The scientist who discovered a cure for malaria and saved the lives of millions is a poor man in his old age. Is that providential? The ultimate absurdity of this way of interpreting personal favors as the trademark of providence comes out in the facetious remark of a wag, who said, "I have a toothache; therefore, there is no God."

### *Can we escape material anxiety?*

It is important to remember that Jesus' advice, "Be not anxious," was not addressed to self-centred persons, for whom material interests were the whole of life. He might have advised selfish people to be anxious about their income and prospects. If he looked on our selfish civilization, he might well show us that there had been provided enough and to spare for everybody, and that we had better be anxious about our methods of distribution, else we might starve people into revolution.

There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus to support the idea that we can trust some sort of providential bell-boy at the beck and call of selfish individuals so that they need not worry about looking after themselves. We have



## RELIEF FROM ANXIETY

not been true to him in the sentimental religion that talks vaguely of God in the abstract, miraculously helping and providing and protecting in the abstract. We reach reality when we think of providence in connection with what actually happens. Just as bodily growth is given as a by-product to people devoted to normal physical interests, in the same mysterious way all that makes for life on its higher levels comes as a by-product to those who are devoted to the ends for which creation is working. And even material assistance would come more often to those who are devoted to interests that concern us all, if only our society were not organized around a selfish principle of gain which interferes with the evolution of the common good. Scientific devotion to truth and social co-operation hold promise of by-products of material benefits which will yet surprise us.

*Is our ordinary welfare only a matter of self-reliance?*

We have already answered this question in part. Everything we live by is given, and to that immeasurable extent we rely on constant provision from beyond the power of man. We, of course, have our part to play in taking advantage of what is given and managing its distribution in society. And here human efficiency or interference will enter in to affect results for better or worse. All that goes on to check up our mistakes, bring

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us to our senses, wake us up and keep us hunting for better ways to reorganize our life for the benefit of all,—this points to something superhuman entering in when we are seemingly looking after ourselves.

### 4. GUARANTEE OF USEFULNESS

*If we do not look out for ourselves, who will?*

Nothing can take the place of what we must do for ourselves; but there is one important problem in our welfare which, like growth, has to be cared for when we are not giving it a thought. It is the problem of being wanted. Obviously we cannot go out directly and make people want us as friends, or as partners, or as employees. Being too anxious about making ourselves wanted often hinders rather than helps. A disciple of materialism once said that he intended to spend his entire life looking after his own happiness. He would be quite ready to pile up his profits even if he ruined thousands. He would feel justified in pushing his stark individuality ruthlessly to the limit, paying no attention to morals if they came in his way, accepting no responsibilities that did not further his interest, putting on a false front whenever he needed it to get by, and scrupulously keeping far-sighted watch so that no false moves would interfere with his comfort and pleasure. It seems like a dreary prospect, everlastingly on the lookout for himself.

## GUARANTEE OF USEFULNESS

Being wanted is a by-product of devotion to some creative work that could be significant for everybody. The way an earnest and useful man becomes wanted and involved in a more and more interesting life is always a surprise to him. In the last analysis a man's welfare depends on the way he has become wanted.

*Does not worldly success lie with the man who selfishly looks after himself?*

All too often. The world's disasters in the twentieth century are largely the result of this every-one-for-himself policy. A superhuman necessity that is not our choice operates in the direction of a more mutual way of living whereby the work of the world shall be managed for the benefit of all who are engaged in it.

In the meantime, in the midst of injustice and suffering, there is the deeper personal matter of getting our life to count for something. Mark Hopkins used to say to his classes that there must come a time when you discover the difference between *having* things and *being* a person who counts. He put it this way. If you had the choice between having the whole world, and being deaf, and then dumb and then blind, you would see that *being* was more important than *having*. In other words, what we need most is not a guarantee for having all we want, but a guarantee for being of use.

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Where do we look for that guarantee? We know from plain experience that the effect of people's lives, when devoted to what is of worth to the world, has a way of travelling beyond their observation. Without their giving it a thought, some simple act, or casual utterance, or personal sacrifice, sets an influence running indefinitely, like a perpetual moving picture which continues to run while the original actors are doing something else. Somehow life has been arranged so that what happens in a moment may go on having significance for an unlimited future. We have all trusted this arrangement and lived by it; the world would be hopeless without it.

By this method it is possible to guarantee our use, even when it is not possible to guarantee our safety or immediate success. Our physical tragedies can be used to stimulate the discoveries that bring protection. Our mistakes can be used to teach us wisdom. Our unfair suffering can be used to show up injustice and enlist the hearts of men against it. The cross of Christ is the supreme confirmation of all our faith that any life completely abandoned to the service of love will be made to count, no matter what happens. On this faith has been built all the heroism of the world. The man who devotes himself to becoming a necessity in creation will come nearer to finding his destiny than the man who simply minds his own business.

## LIFE'S MARGIN OF SURPRISE

### 5. LIFE'S MARGIN OF SURPRISE

*Are we responsible for all the results of living?*

We can see neither the beginning nor the end of any event, and so can have only a limited judgment of all that really happens. One thing, however, is sure: there is always a *margin of surprise* in every life. We easily forget this margin of surprise in all our human activity. Our ordinary life is made up of two parts: that which we do, and the unexpected results which follow in the margin of surprise.

There, for instance, is a man doing his work faithfully, measuring up to everything that is asked of him; and then, in the margin of surprise, the opportunities that keep seeking him out without his seeking them, and the leading of life into avenues of service that one never planned in advance. Or there is the patient application to study and research and investigation, and then, in the margin of surprise, the consequences that no one quite anticipated. As we look back at hard experiences, which we tried in vain to avoid or accepted in bitterness, we see that they often leave something unexpected in our character or in our influence which we would not lose now at any price. Christ's is not the only cross that has made an unexpected difference in the margin of surprise. And again, people who have recovered from an unworthy past have found through their new consecra-

tion that some undreamed-of use can be made of the past they wanted to forget. All human labor and striving furnishes a certain amount of material, but the full result requires that margin of surprise where something uncalculated, beyond human control, takes a hand.

This mystery, where some larger activity connects with each of us to make something new out of the miscellaneous experiences of our life, is not a pious theory. The experience of being worked into a bigger plan than our own is a fact for each of us, whatever language we may use about it.

### 6. RECOGNITION OF CHARACTER

#### *Is the universe indifferent?*

A later chapter on adversity will face other questions similar to this. Unfortunately we have been somewhat misled about the indifference of the universe. Science has been teaching us that the forces of nature go their way, with no regard for our personal whims. This is a great lesson to learn, but it does not mean that there is no recognition of what we do.

Turn, for instance, to what happens in cases where we refuse to grow up. This is one way of talking about what the Bible calls "sin." To stop content with life where we are pursued by the sense of more that we could be,—that is sin, however you dress it up. Some people have been trying to tell us that there is nothing in the

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universe that cares whether we grow up or not. As one writer put it, "Ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the natural universe." We are up against a heartless system that simply leaves us alone.

But we are not left alone when, like Peter Pan, we refuse to grow up. Mark how we fare when we fail to outgrow that infantile passion to have our own way. Take that dominating selfishness out into the world and see friendships cool around you, see your children revolt from your overweening desire to impose your will upon them, see the possibilities of co-operation shut their doors in your face wherever you go with that childish self-conceit. Trouble trails your footsteps everywhere and will not let you alone when you refuse to grow up.

See if you are left alone when you are content to stop with a second best. Perhaps, like a child, you only half do what you are given to do and leave it for others to be forever picking up after you. Take that half-heartedness out into life and see how your neglects are always turning up, humiliating you, destroying people's confidence, spoiling the expectations which would lead men to seek you for important service. Wherever you are content with devotion to some narrow group, or narrow point of view, all progress finds you a stumbling block, and you are hounded by all the forces that are making for a better life.

See if we are left alone when we refuse to grow up to

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new ways of settling human disputes, and new ways of planning an economic life for the welfare of all instead of the profit of a few! Does it look today as if nothing in the universe noticed our foolishness, nothing cared whether we grew up or not? If we will not solve a problem when it should be solved, we will not be let off until we solve it later in tragedy.

*Is not the process of correcting errors purely mechanical?*

In the main it must be that way. Certainly we do not expect the universe to have some human method of book-keeping that will record all our mistakes. It is sufficient to know that there is a way of letting every individual know whether or not he is right with reality. We have already touched upon this in a general way in discussing judgment. But how particular it can be!

When any one faces the ultimate disappointment and distress that follows a selfish indulgence, he is having a taste of that influence which always detects what is not excellent. When any one realizes that his secret inner character, which he supposed was hidden, is becoming sized up by the people among whom he lives, he has the evidence of the inevitable judgment which never misses any one. When we are lured by some ideal that makes us try to better our work again and again, we are in the presence of this judging influence which seeks our best



## THE MANAGEMENT OF INFLUENCE

and will not let us go with less. This all means that our fragment of life is a recognized part of the universal scheme of things. At the end of a long and useful career, Dr. George A. Gordon, for forty years the great preacher to youth in Boston, said that this idea of judgment was to him the most consoling and invigorating of all human thoughts. "Nothing," he says, "so lifts a man in the order of being, nothing so takes him out of the whole region of things, as the idea that his thinking and feeling and conduct are of concern to the Infinite here."

In our detailed connections with the whole nature of things in the margin of surprise and in the experience of correction, we find ourselves attended to in spite of our apparent insignificance. However we may imagine it, here we link up with the "unassailable heart of things." And in different ways, for different people, this relationship has grown more personal as they have followed Christ's direction of life and tried to do something worth while in a hard world. Strangely enough, those who, like him, have loved most and suffered most for the right and for the good of all, have most often had the deepest sense of being in greater hands than their own.

### 7. THE MANAGEMENT OF INFLUENCE

*Why is a man's worth often overlooked?*

This question arises when we begin to lose faith in

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the effect of our life. It should help us to know that the effect of our life depends, not alone on what we do, but on what we stand for. What do we represent? What do people think of when they think of us? That is the way life finally counts.

This implies some method of establishing the effect of one's life. We certainly cannot handle our own influence. Few of us ever stop to think that some recognition must be made of everything we do in this intricately interconnected world.

There have been given to each of us three marvellous capacities for spreading and establishing the effect of each other's lives. There is the capacity to take suggestions from one another. That capacity never stops working. It works when we think about it and when we are not thinking. We take suggestions as inevitably as a sponge absorbs water. We take them from what people do and say, from what they think and feel, from the way they look, from the attitudes they take, from the very hopes they hold. Then there is the capacity to hold suggestions. We all have in us a mysterious storage space. We can pack away an apparently endless amount of suggestions. And we never can tell when one of them is apt to crop up from our subconscious depths to play a part in our decisions. Furthermore, we have a capacity to reduce suggestions to habits. This habit mechanism tends to keep whatever we have learned so that we can

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go on to new attainments without having to go back and learn everything over again as for the first time.

Taken together, these three capacities form an arrangement to broadcast and establish the life of every one in the great life of the world. When it is used to convey our best, we see how the finest experience of the race could thus be accumulated, preserved and made available everywhere as a basis for constantly new advances. It is all an indispensable scheme for the growth of the human race.

There is something almost terrifying about living in the midst of such a scheme as this. This machinery cannot stop working when a bad influence is let loose within it, any more than a radio can stop recording other noises in a room where a man is speaking. Here we all are, good, bad, and indifferent, living in the presence of this broadcasting system which is superhuman in its scope and operation. There is no way to prevent the bad from getting into the system without shutting out the good. Something has to be done with everything we do.

### *How can one person count for much?*

In the complicated life of our time, individuals are apt to feel swamped and helpless because they have so little effect on all that needs to be done. In the face of this it is a comfort to know that one's influence must fall somewhere.

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We either contribute to the tendency that is pulling life down or to the movement that is lifting it up. We are not like separate grains of sand in a pile, but we are organized into a vast common life through which some sort of use has to be made of everybody. This system, by which nothing from an atom to an individual is overlooked, is what gives assurance that we will not be lost sight of. When our best is given, it may arouse the best in some other man who can do far more than we, and he in turn will set going the best in others whom we never know. Thus do we bring into play much more power than we can exercise by ourselves alone. Without this superhuman supplement our life would be limited indeed.

### 8. CONSOLATION

#### *Can faith help in handling adversity?*

This is too big a question to meet in one answer. But in line with the thought we are following, it can be pointed out that comfort in adversity is largely a by-product of devotion to some opportunity in the hard situation. Faith inclines us to look for creative activity where something better is being made out of a state of affairs that is not as it ought to be. Devotion to that activity at any point brings a by-product of consolation which we cannot create for ourselves.

One thinks of Dr. Trudeau, who as a young phy-

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sician, was stricken with tuberculosis and went to the Adirondacks for his health. It was a gloomy outlook for an active man. Finding what open air did for him, he devoted himself to making that treatment available for others afflicted as he was. The by-product of that devotion was a passionate satisfying interest that resulted in one of the greatest sanitariums in the world. That was his comfort in adversity. In every difficulty there is some opportunity for living so that others, with that same affliction, might have more courage or chance to go on. Where we have suffered loss, the only real comfort is to be given something to live for.

So people who have been blind have found opportunities to make blindness less irksome to others and promote the fight against the affliction, and in their devotion have found their consolation. That is the secret of invalids who live above their affliction. It is the secret of all who have suffered from oppression and cruelty and greed. Not in meek resignation, but in revolt against wrong for the sake of themselves and their fellows, they have found that for which it is a comfort to live and die.

### *What comfort do we want?*

At bottom, what we really want is not to get something but to be devoted to something. How many samples we have had of what life is like when devoted to nothing! There is no final comfort in it. A prom-

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inent head of a great museum once made this sad observation: "In all the work I am trying to do in the city where I live, I meet so many younger and older men who are simply neutral,—neither hot nor cold, without intense convictions or enthusiasms." Some day life finds out people like that. An unsettling experience taxes their endurance and they learn that they have no interest from which comfort can come. They are like Old Mother Hubbard of the nursery rhyme, who

". . . went to the cupboard  
To get her poor dog a bone,  
But when she got there  
The cupboard was bare;  
And so the poor dog had none."

An undevoted life is a barren and comfortless existence.

Contrast with these pitiful lives the attitude of a man like Jesus, who, as he went to his death, could say, "Weep not for me." When one can take the gruelling of life and face the worst, and not even want to be pitied, he has the key to great living. The handling of adversity always runs back to one question: "What have you found to live by?" Some great and permanent devotion is always the secret of unforeseen comfort and strength.

Even in the case of our personal sorrows, this comfort which comes as a by-product of devotion is what sustains us. There recently died in this country a teacher, who, in his youth, went to California for his health. He began

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teaching boys there and did so well that other boys came from afar to be with him, until a fine school grew up around his personality. He devoted himself to the best in art and nature and literature and public affairs. Then he lived himself into multitudes of people. Out of that devotion came a power to endure anything. He once said, "I have wondered if I could endure the loss of everything I cared for. I think I could, calling my own life ended (as it must end some time), and doing what I could to help some other." Finding the opportunity in an adversity and being devoted to that,—thus do we open the way for comfort to be sent as a by-product. The creative process is concerned with promoting things that are significant for everybody, overcoming conditions adverse to life, and releasing undiscovered possibilities. As we devote our lives to these concerns, in the midst of our adversity, the supplementing activity of the whole scheme of things brings us the comfort of more abundant life as naturally and mysteriously as beauty is supplied to every lily of the field. (See also Chapter X.)

## CHAPTER V

### UNRECOGNIZED FAITH

So far we have been describing the various activities that affect our lives in the creative system with which we are so intimately connected. We have gathered the raw material for what we might call the unrecognized faith by which we live. This faith becomes religious, not by artificially adding God to the creative activity already familiar to us, but by recognizing the religious quality in the activity itself, as though something superhuman were connecting with us here.

In this chapter we shall sum up impressions we have hinted at all along, and see how naturally and often unconsciously we trust what is superhuman in the daily affairs of life.

#### I. AWARENESS OF THE SUPERHUMAN

*How can we tell what any one really believes?*

The belief that actually moves life is shown not so much by what we think or say, as *by what we do*. Once a young man argued for a whole evening with a professor, attempting to demonstrate that he did not believe in unselfishness. When he was asked, upon leaving, what he expected to do in the coming year, he replied that



although his heart was set on continuing his studies, he felt he ought to enter business where he could earn enough to help another member of his family enter college. What we really believe is shown by what we do. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Evidently the faith we live by never waits until we settle all the intellectual questions which confront us. Of course we must ever try to form our opinions and reform them, and in this process it will be of interest to hear what this scientist thinks, and what some psychologist thinks, and what that philosopher or poet thinks; but certainly before we can gather up all this welter of opinions into some neat formula for belief, we have a long, long way to go. In the meanwhile we live by some rough-and-ready faith in the superhuman which sustains us as we advance in this endless process of making up our minds.

### *What is unrecognized faith?*

Take a sample of such faith from a popular writer, who reflects all our modern uncertainty and confusion. When it comes to the handling of life in action, he falls back on a faith which seems to strike a familiar and sympathetic chord in the hearts of everybody, religious and irreligious alike. "Underlying the disorder in the outer world," he says, "there is disorder in the spirit of man. Only the consciousness of a *purpose that is*

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*mightier than any man and worthy of all men can fortify and inspirit and compose the souls of men."* There you have it, vague and indefinite, but a real faith that something superhuman is being done with our world which is worthy of the respect and co-operation of all mankind.

*Are we self-sufficient without some kind of faith?*

No. The newspaper is one of the best places to discover the range and strength of unrecognized faith. That is our best summary of what all sorts of typical people are *doing* everywhere in the world. You must see them in action if you would know the faith by which they really live.

A tabulation of the actions reported in a metropolitan newspaper, over a period of five days, revealed plainly *that people were quite generally living by faith in some "purpose mightier than all men."* In the terrific years of the post-war depression we were obliged to deal with something like an irresistible judgment, which called our whole scheme of life in question, and insisted that we could not go on as we were, whether we wanted to or not. Nothing escaped this overhauling; economic theories, social habits, forms of faith, moral codes, education, science, government,—all were weighed in the balance and found wanting. Our high-speed civilization, with all its pomp and circumstance, was stopped dead in

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a mad career, to face an eternal authority which is always more than a match for us, and to which humanity is finally responsible: "a purpose mightier than any man."

This was nothing new, but the crisis brought out what the routine view of life had hidden. Of course some will say that circumstances simply demonstrated where we were wrong. But that explains nothing. What are these mysterious circumstances which get together and judge a whole civilization and demand a change? All we know is that *the logic of events and the nature of things have been ordained as a working system by some authority which is not in human legislatures*. This final authority is ever vague and mostly unknown, utterly different from us, never to be fully described in words. No man by searching can find it out entirely; but it has a method of discovering us,—to check us up and keep us aware of the direction of truth. Watch men in action, and you see them living by this faith.

It is to this eternal authority that men have referred when talking of their faith in God. In one sense they have conceived Him as that which is wholly different from us, completely beyond and above anything we know, the unsearchable, whose ways are not our ways, the something better than all our best, the utter contrast by which we know our incompleteness and become aware of our baseness. And what prevents such faith from vanishing in thin air is the stern fact that, though we can-

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not find out such a God by searching, He has His way of finding us out. We live by that faith which has been taught us in action.

### *Is there any faith that unites us?*

The newspapers reveal that *people's actions indicate a wide belief in a purpose "worthy of all men."* To be sure, the daily news also records many actions which show faith in purposes that are not worthy of all men. But wherever faith is narrowed down to some unworthy and selfish purpose, there you find the people who have not realized their own lives to the full and who divide the world in futile strife. How that testimony piles up in the papers as you follow the course of this ruthless individuality, inconsiderate of everything but its own ends!

In vivid contrast to this record of evil was the other list, twice as long, of actions which showed faith in a purpose around which all men could be united. Wherever ugly and hampering and destructive influences were at work the world over, there appeared this far-flung, tireless purpose, moving to release beauty and truth and life, which most men did not realize was there. Read the papers with eyes open, and you begin to feel the power of this pervading purpose, its uniting effect, its infinite variety, and unfailing force.

It appears wherever you see friendship struggling

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against enmity, love redeeming the lost, art struggling for expression, education fighting ignorance, science battling disease, righteous indignation facing political corruption, forces of peace opposing division and strife. In the post-war period it emerges as a purpose of tremendous urgency to mutualize the lives of men, so that we might succeed together and not so much at the expense of each other. All through our race this purpose runs like a living spirit, within each of us, and yet something greater than ourselves, hampered by mistakes and perverted by human folly, and casting over the world the ominous shadow of what might happen should we fail to respond. It is not only a purpose mightier than any man, but a purpose working within men—winning, uniting, empowering, seeking them while they are yet in the midst of all that is wrong, and worthy of the devotion of every man. All very indefinite, but all very real!

Of course much of this passion to improve life is little more than the urge of human need. For purely selfish reasons men may strive individually and together to better their lot. To this extent the business of helping each other obtain what we all want may be nothing more than the herd instinct plus some intelligence and modern methods. The vision of a race of people forever looking after themselves is no more religious than the sight of an individual forever looking after himself. So long as

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life remains self-centred, it does not rise above the merely human, even when millions of self-centred lives work together to satisfy themselves. But we should not overlook the fact that these driving needs are not our human invention. They were established in our nature, by some power not our own, as a leverage by which we could be moved on from one level of life to another. So far this is a providential and not a human arrangement. A divine purpose working toward increase of life might utilize these needs to push us on while we remain on the self-centred level of living.

This, however, does not exclude the further fact that all through the human struggle for improvement we are, again and again, lifted out of the self-centred sphere. Men do lose themselves and become possessed by a purpose for good which is different from a selfish need. They feel that instead of the purpose belonging to them for their use, they belong to it for larger uses than they can at any time see.

It is this pervading purpose which men have had in mind when speaking of God, not only as the great unknown, utterly beyond and above us, driving us by our needs, but as the indwelling spirit, moving through men, sharing the burden of the world's selfishness, and known to us in all that makes for more abundant life. Here again it is more than words can express. No man can define such a God by our human processes of thought;

## GAINING ASSURANCE

but in action we may be found out by His purpose, which can sway our lives with power.

### 2. GAINING ASSURANCE

*Must we rely on proof for our faith?*

If there is in this universe any superhuman activity which we call divine, it must always have been here, just as gravity was present even before we fully understood it. Therefore we should come to know this superhuman action, as we know other facts. Most of our knowledge in all lines starts from something outside knocking at the door of our minds. We begin life knowing nothing, pitched into the world without any previous explanations and directions. We are bumped into by all kinds of realities, which were here before we came, which awaken us, stimulate our energies and set us thinking this way and that. We do not begin by proving that there is something knocking at our minds. The knocking is actually there—hard knocking sometimes—and our part is to understand its significance.

In like manner we do not need to prove the existence of what we call God's activity before we can have a religious faith. All thought of God starts from one age-old fact that confronts every one born into this world. *We are not the originators of all that we live by.* We are connected with resources and activities greater than our own powers. We do not establish the value of the true

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and good and lovely. We did not vote on the laws which seem to govern this ordered system in which we live and move and have our being. We deal with something greater than our own little power to care for ourselves. All our living is a matter of relating ourselves to a life-giving, truth-revealing, beauty-making, personality-producing activity going on about us. In some other hands than ours lies the responsibility for possibilities of meaning and worth which never were invented by man, and which are forever the stimulating influence in all our advance. We do not prove the existence of all this activity by which we live; we accept it, live with it, overlook it, misjudge it, and try ever to realize more of its nature and so understand better how to be related to it. It is this unquestionable, more than human activity to which we refer when we use that particular name spelled GOD. We start with this reality knocking at the doors of our life, just as a scientist starts with nature, not by having to prove it, but by taking it as something to be better understood.

### *How can one believe what seems unreal?*

It is not effective to ask people to take religion on authority alone, though we can insist on respect for the tested experience of the race. Nor is it helpful to suggest that religion is a mere hypothesis or guess, formu-



lated by the mind and supported by argument. The most effective way is to begin with some unrecognized faith which is real but not recognized as religious. Here is a homely parable.

Imagine the plight of a man with a motor car who found himself, late at night, without fuel, on a lonely back road in the country. Some one with a dogmatic mind, passing that way, might say to him, "The guide book says there is a gasoline station two miles ahead in the dark. Believe that and be saved." You see where that leaves the driver. Another, with a theoretic turn of mind, chancing along the road, might give this advice: "Perhaps you do not believe in the authority of the guide book. Then make up a theory that there is a gas station ahead in the dark, argue for it with all the evidence available, and live as though your theory were true." And you see where that leaves the driver. Now a realistic man comes down that road and he says, after looking over the situation, "Here is a spare gallon of fuel which you have under the front seat and which you did not realize was there. Begin with that. There is enough to take you ahead on the road where, as the guide book said, more fuel can be found."

That spare gallon may not always be under the seat of a car, but every man has in his life some unrecognized trust in superhuman activity which makes for more life and links him with his fellows in the larger enterprise of

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creation. The wise procedure is to recognize in nature and in human nature the kinds of activity, not merely human, that really make for more life, and say, "There, that is what we mean by the activity of God."

### *Can faith survive our changing ideas?*

There are no complete ideas of the infinite. We certainly can recognize superhuman activity, such as we have pointed out, before we can form a final idea of it all. If this were not so, all learning would be impossible. Once the early scientists formed an idea of gravity which recent experts have surrendered in favor of new opinions. But it would be silly to say that gravity is imaginary because men have thought something about it which was not quite so. How ridiculous it would be to form an Anti-Gravity Society, as we have formed atheist societies! The man who proved from the changing opinions of science that gravity was purely imaginary, mere wishful thinking, would only need to jump from a high roof to discover that the earth's attraction was still a going concern. Gravity will always be more than our scientific notions about it, and we will use our best ideas only to help us on to better ones.

In religion, men have always made images of God, and will continue to do so. This is quite a scientific thing to do, so long as we do not worship as final the image which we make and attempt to pass it on to others

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE MAGICAL

as a "chip off the block of absolute truth." It is a plain and indubitable fact that while we ourselves are not the administrators of this universe, it is being administered to bring out new forms of possibility beyond our human planning. Our imaginations about that administration are mostly inadequate and only partly true. "We know in part." We must learn to hold our partial views, not as idols to worship, but as approximations—the best impressions we have with which to work as the great revealing process of life unfolds.

### 3. THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE MAGICAL

There are three words, connected with our thought of God, which make for constant confusion: the miraculous, the supernatural, and the superhuman. These words carry such varied suggestions, from all sorts of traditions, that they recall different meanings to different people. Such use of familiar terms, that say one thing to some people and another thing to others, is very misleading when discussing what we mean by God.

#### *Are supernatural methods being supplanted?*

When science has come in one door, the supernatural *seems* to have gone out the other. In came Louis Pasteur and a scientific knowledge of disease, and out went the superstition which, in 1784, advised people who were bitten by a mad dog to put up written prayers at the

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shrine of St. Hubert. In came chemistry and physics, with their power to harness natural resources, and out went the hope of obtaining our wants by magical juggling. In came a scientific knowledge of the natural consequences of human behavior, in individuals and in society, and out went artificial codes and threats of hell.

In comes the natural and out goes the supernatural. So it *appears*; and the natural way is more effective in the practical effort to rid us of our ills and supply our wants; to heal our diseases and extend our life; to find relief from fears and organize the world by goodwill for mutual support, until poverty and war may be no more, and science and art may be the enjoyment of everybody. Helping ourselves along this line, we seem to have less need of God to deliver us and comfort us with magical favors. Trust in a false supernaturalism has often been an opiate, putting people to sleep where they should have their eyes open to natural possibilities, which science and organization were ready to bring.

This has led many to suppose that the supernatural God was a human invention to comfort man as he stood in helpless ignorance before nature, and to control his conduct in society by rewards and punishments impressive enough to deter him from disturbing the social order which the rulers had established. We are living through the greatest revolution in the religious history of man

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE MAGICAL  
—supernatural methods apparently doing less and less,  
natural methods doing more and more. We cannot stop  
it, and there is no reason why we should.

*What remains when supernatural magic is gone?*

We should remember that belief in miracles was a way in which men expressed their *expectancy beyond human calculation*. From earliest times men have observed that more happens in this world than human ingenuity alone accounts for. In a certain stage of intelligence this meant that anything might happen with this other-than-human factor in the reckoning; and people were therefore ready and eager to put a miraculous interpretation upon any event that was out of the ordinary course. They were wrong when they thought there was some *substitute* for human effort, but they were right in assuming a *supplement* to man's ability.

Once a man, dressed in evening clothes, was walking down a street in New York on a rainy, slushy night in winter. His heart was touched by two small boys dragging a huge box of kindling wood to their tenement home. He surprised them by taking hold of the rope to help. But as he pulled, one boy deserted for a glimpse in a shop window, and then the other was lured off by a food vender, until the gentleman in evening clothes found himself pulling kindling wood, alone, through the smiling crowd of a busy street. He quickly retired and

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let the boys know that he was a supplement but not a substitute for their activity.

So superhuman activity is not a substitute which will do for us what we should do, or think for us where we must think for ourselves. But *the fact abides that more can happen than human ingenuity alone accounts for.* We live, not by rowing our own boat, but by setting our sails to catch more power than we can create. The mystery of the superhuman is ever with us. When Joyce Kilmer wrote "Only God can make a tree," he simply asserted that the natural process of the universe is not a human but a superhuman method. No one even in a scientific age will go out under the stars at night and say, "When I consider the heavens the work of our fingers, the moon and the stars which we have ordained, what is there that is superhuman that we should be mindful of that?"

*What, besides physical forces, do we rely upon?*

As we have pointed out, there are two kinds of forces present in the universe. Outside many of our iron foundries you will see an electric magnet lifting a heap of scrap-iron from a freight car. There is a mysterious and marvellous power; but that sort of power cannot lift a discouraged man out of the dumps. More significant than the natural forces are those other influences that affect personality. For lack of a better name we call

## MIRACLES ACCORDING TO LAW

them spiritual influences, because they move the spirits of men. They may operate through the physical and not in a magical vacuum, but their effect on our spirits is not like any physical force we know. No scientific discovery of physical powers can ever displace the stimulus that reaches a man through a good mother, a faithful friend, or through some hero and pioneer of his race, or from the upward struggle of humanity toward truth. In actual experience we deal with only two kinds of power, natural power and spiritual stimulus. The real battle in the world today lies right at this point, where men are trying to understand the reality and significance of influences that affect the spirits of men. We are less and less interested in magical forces. We know almost more than is good for us about physical forces, and one can understand the plea that science take a holiday until we catch up in our knowledge of power that changes the lives of men.

### 4. MIRACLES ACCORDING TO LAW

*Is religion possible without some faith in the miraculous?*

It is curious how the belief in miracles has steadily declined in the world without any sense of loss. Once miracles were the boasted asset of religion; but now, for an increasing number of people, they are an embarrassing liability. We do not miss the primitive expectations, be-

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cause a more mature expectation has taken their place. We expect more than our ancestors ever dreamed of.

The point is this: where we have lost faith in miracles contrary to law, *we have gained an immeasurable faith in miracles that are possible according to law.* We have learned that the "laws of nature" are not bars that imprison activity. Knowledge of law sets free the possibilities. With a creative process which is forever producing novelties, there seem to be no bounds that we can set for the future. One might think that men would be most expectant where belief in magic was general. Not so. When faith in magic is at its height, you find humanity at its lowest point of hope. Go back among the superstitious natives of Africa, or the ignorant peasants of any backward region and see hopelessness written across their life.

A good illustration is found in the realm of healing. A surgeon has reported that among certain primitive tribes, where medicine was magic, the only relief from suffering was an anæsthetic administered by a man who would beat you on the head with a club. These anæsthetists knew just where and how hard to hit to give you oblivion for ten minutes or an hour, as the case required. Beyond that, people were hopeless; they were not even looking for anything better. How different is our expectancy in the direction of new forms of anæsthesia that may transform the whole handling of pain!



## MIRACLES ACCORDING TO LAW

Our miraculous expectancy, based on scientific diagnosis and procedure, is well expressed in the testimony of a famous American physician: "I have had cases, any one of which could have been worthy of a shrine or made the germ of a pilgrimage. For more than ten years a girl lay paralyzed and confined to her bed in a New Jersey home. The family had worn themselves out in her service. The new surroundings of a hospital, positive assurance that she could get well with a few simple measures, sufficed; and in a fortnight she walked around the hospital square. This makes one appreciate how well-meaning people may be deceived as to the true nature of the cure effected at the shrine of a saint." In such cases, and in all curing of disease, help is given which is not a substitute for human guidance and ability, but a supplement to it. And that supplement is probably ninety per cent of what happens.

We seldom realize how such a resource undergirds all our activities; and when human self-confidence has been shaken to its foundations, it is surely time that we strengthened the sense of this incalculable assistance to all our human enterprise. To expect help in this way from a source beyond humanity is more religious than belief in miracles of magic.

## CHAPTER VI

### GOD AND PERSONALITY

THERE is so much that is stupendous and impersonal going on in the universe, that the idea of a personal God is not easy to understand. But in reality this is the same mystery we face in understanding human personality. The most obvious part of the life of any one of us is impersonal,—muscle is impersonal, bone is impersonal, so are arteries, nerves, and all our other organs. Nonetheless, despite all this impersonality, we are related to each other, not as bodies, but as personal beings. In the light of this we shall try to clarify our thoughts about our dealings with a personal God.

#### I. MECHANICAL METHODS AND PERSONAL DEALINGS

*Has science undermined faith in God's personal dealings?*

Formerly the belief in miracles stood not only for expectancy beyond human calculation, but also for personal connection with God. When something unusual happened to the advantage of an individual, it was interpreted as a special providence, marking God's particular attention to that individual. During the War you often

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heard people call it a miracle when one man escaped injury where others were blown to pieces in a trench, as though providence stepped in to help one man while overlooking his friends in the same predicament. This habit of mind is a very old inheritance. The Old Testament is full of this belief that, when people are good, God takes special care to guard them from harm. Jesus took exception to this point of view. But these occasional pieces of good fortune have always assumed a miraculous appearance for certain types of mind. People have liked to think of themselves as picked out by God for special treatment; and by interpreting incidents as personal favors they strengthened the impression of personal connection with God. They overlooked occasions when special fortune failed, because the occasional good fortune seemed such precious assurance of particular attention from on high.

As we shall see below, this whole idea of God's personal relation with individuals needs a complete overhauling to bring it into line with new knowledge of the natural order of life.

*Is not nature largely automatic?*

There certainly is much in nature that is automatic. Our food is digested automatically. When anything is wrong in our bodies, nature automatically rings the

alarm bell of pain. Psychologists have been discovering something automatic about the way our minds work. In the realm of character there is an automatic element in the way we respond to certain situations. This mechanistic interpretation has often seemed to be the very enemy of religion.

An automatic element in nature can help us imagine how God gets things done. We are used to thinking in terms of automatic machines, and we forget that machines never run themselves, make themselves and mend themselves, and decide what they shall produce. An English writer has well said that a machine is something that operates only where a mind has been present. We have come to the point where we must realize that God does not have to do everything by hand, as it were. We are in a "living universe," not a lifeless machine. The laws of nature and human nature are simply descriptions of the trustworthy activity that goes on here. This is something far more reliable than magic and traditional miracle, and very different from a dead machine; and its possibilities suggest to us the intimate and infinite ranges of God's connection with us all. The thought of automatic elements need not interfere with our personal relationship with God's spirit, any more than the intricate mechanism of our vocal chords and our mental machinery interfere with our personal relations with each other.

*Can any God interfere with nature?*

There is no necessity of interference. That is an idea which comes over from an old way of picturing God as somewhere outside His universe, waiting to break into it upon request. This whole geographical picture of God's relation to His world is a figure of speech. The power of mind does not really bear a geographical relation to this natural order.

A parallel case is seen in the effect of our own mental and spiritual activity upon the physical world in which we live. If the world were left to itself and its natural laws, it would remain with its metals buried in the earth, its coal unmined, its electricity unharnessed, as in the days of the glacial age. But when the mind and spirit of man have come upon the scene, miracles have happened. Metal and coal have become skyscrapers and engines and ships. Electricity has lighted our streets and furnished us power and extended the range of our voice around the earth. We say this is all on the level of the natural. No superstitious magic had to be dragged in to accomplish these transformations, which may yet go on without limit. Mental power was the miracle-worker.

Our universe has in it this creative power of a mental and spiritual sort which we share. Here is the point where we find ourselves akin to the nature of God. This is His kind of activity. Power of this variety can make

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and remake the world and operate to produce miracles without breaking laws. If we call superhuman activity *supernatural*, we do not mean that it is some *unnatural* power utterly beyond our acquaintance. As a great psychologist once expressed it: "We are organs of something greater than ourselves. We are enveloped and suffused and partly actuated by some self-like principle in the universe."

### 2. THE HEARTLESS ORDER OF NATURE

*Is not the universe too impersonal for belief in a personal God?*

Our main trouble is that we assume everything should be personal in a universe where there is a personal God. When a great scientist, skiing in the Alps, was engulfed in an avalanche, we were shocked that so important a mind should be at the mercy of a landslide; as though we expected an avalanche to be personal and care for a valuable man. Looking at all the regular, law-abiding operations of the universe, we wonder why we cannot detect anything personal there, if there is a personal God.

Let us put the whole matter in a parable, which, of course, cannot be pressed too far. Suppose you were being shown through a modern newspaper plant, which, for the sake of our argument, was a great force for right in the nation. On the ground floor you would see a room full of machinery, printing papers by the thousands. Some rather grimy individuals walk about, ren-

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dering little attentions here and there to the machine. Machinery, power, sheets of woodpulp, and printer's ink—all impersonal—with some machine tenders just minding the process to assure results! You would not know from the appearance that anything was occurring in that room to affect the character of a nation, or that any personal mind was carrying out a great policy.

Then suppose you went upstairs into the work-room of reporters and compositors. More machines, typewriters, and telephones are connecting with endless people outside who gather news of what is happening in the world! A flood of miscellaneous facts is pouring into this central place. But there is something a little more personal here. These men seem to be selecting and organizing this news according to some policy. They are being induced to reject this and accept that by their appreciation of what the policy holds most valuable. They cannot see the policy with their eyes, nor hear it speak, but they recognize its claim. If you were to ask them who established the policy, they would say, "Go upstairs and see the editorial staff."

Up there you would find a company bound together by the mind of one man who dominates that paper with a great purpose for good. (Remember, this is a paper where the editor is really free to have a purpose.) As you talked with these men, learned their point of view, perceived their hopes for the future, discovered their

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personal pride in the machinery and organization of the plant, and then found they had a personal interest in all the workers—clear down to the machine tenders on the first floor—you would feel that you knew the owner without seeing him. You would understand how there could be something personal about the whole plant after all.

As you went downstairs again, into the less personal parts of the enterprise, you would find a new meaning everywhere. Knowing the personality of the man at the top, you would detect signs of his influence in the busy reporters and compositors; yes, even in the machinery and in the order that prevailed throughout. You would understand that the mind of the owner could not express itself to the nation without this mechanical means. But you could not guess what the owner was like from looking at the machinery and the composing rooms on the way up, except as you met some men who had caught the spirit of the whole enterprise. And if, on the ground floor, you saw a man suddenly caught in the machinery and mangled to death, you might be shocked, but you would say, "Why expect a machine to be personal?"

### 3. GOD IN PERSONAL TERMS

*How can we picture God as a person?*

By belief in a personal God we certainly do not mean the possession of a photograph of God which we can



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see with our mind's eye. When some people realize that they cannot draw a mental picture of God, they are apt to think they are losing their faith in a personal God, because they can neither locate Him nor focus their mind upon Him. But you cannot make a mental photograph of the spirit of your best friend. That which we mean by spirit cannot be photographed or pictured. Of course we are bound to form some notion of God if we talk about Him at all, but the main thing about believing in Him is not the picture we can form in our minds.

*Is not the word "personality" too limited and human to apply to God?*

Our human ideas are always inadequate for describing God, but some of man's crudest notions of a personal God may have more truth in them than many intellectual notions that are impersonal. The pronoun "it" does not describe the most important activity in this mysterious universe.

Man began, of course, by thinking of personality in terms of the body. But we know that we like a person not because of his body, which might weigh one hundred and eighty pounds and be six feet tall. Some people with that equipment we do not like at all. Personality is that invisible quality of life that loves and thinks and wills and feels responsibility for truth and goodness and

beauty; that takes other lives into its own by sympathy and embraces the past by memory and reaches into the future with imagination. There is something boundless—infinite, if you will—about this quality of life. Personality is the word to suggest this. When we apply this term to God, it does not limit Him to a human figure. It is the only word we have to suggest an infinite nature. We rightly hesitate to use only our own personality as a help in thinking of God, and our instinct is true when we take the greatest personality we know in Christ and think up through him to God. That has proved more fruitful than taking some cosmic force like electricity and thinking up through that to God. It is significant that those who have confined their attention *wholly* to the trail of atoms and cosmic forces have led us where the universe seems meaningless. They have left out of their interpretation one whole side of life that is most significant.

#### 4. UNION WITH GOD

*What is meant by union with God?*

When we come to discuss the discipline of keeping alive, we will deal further with this experience. It is such a variable matter with individuals, and so untransferable, that it is better understood by experiment than by explanation. In religion, as in art or any form of apprecia-

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tion, we are baffled by the difficulty of conveying our inner experience to another. What we can explain by reason does not arouse in other people the enjoyment we are trying to explain. The explanation alone is passed on; the enjoyment which moved our feelings remains shut up with us. To live where others have experienced beauty or power or union with God is the only means of understanding.

One definite clue to an inner experience of spirit meeting with spirit is found in the familiar fact of genuineness or sincerity. There is a religious quality to this experience which is far deeper than any of our ordinary explanations.

It is well to remember the insight of Jesus which mistrusted outward appearance and found the real significance of life in its inner quality. Outward behavior may be produced by purely selfish motives responding to pressure from without; but the inward spirit brings us to a real mystery. It defies the popular definition of good living as a matter of correcting errors when experience proves us wrong, and avoiding acts that would do harm to our fellows. Rectifying errors and being prudent on the one hand, and being harmless on the other, make up a simple definition; but the trouble is, it is too simple. There are other elements in a good life which are hard to define and which definitions leave out as though they were not there.

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A recent book raises such questions as these. Why are we so concerned over hidden faults? Why do we feel ourselves polluted by motives that we refuse to express? Why do men who have done wrong feel that they deserve to suffer for it even before society's self-protecting punishment is administered? Why do we feel guilty when we have not been caught? Why are we conscientious to give more than is demanded of us? Why are we ashamed of wrong intentions that will never become known to any one?

No far-sighted fear of outward consequences accounts for this discontent with our inner life. It is not some possible offense against society or some offense against our animal nature that explains that discontent. It is not like regret for being ignorant. Our life is influenced by a mysterious upward urge in the direction of something infinitely better than we are,—a never failing summons toward an unending increase of life. To keep from failing before that searching summons is what makes a man sincere, and gives him self-respect and peace of mind and the power of influence unlike anything else in the world. Whatever we call that upward urge,—conscience, sense of honor, a "potent, felt, interior command," or whether we call it the voice of God,—it is the prime factor in making life sincere.

One does not add God to this, but one may realize that right here we are caught up by the life-making

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activity that is working through the whole scheme of things. Jesus staked his life on that fact, with results that make us have faith in his faith. Even a skeptical modern philosopher, who has found his way out from skepticism to trust, can say: "Surely it is not too fantastic to believe that the upward-tending, unitary life of the universe can also make known its presence in human hearts; when they are in sorrow, as a comforter; when they are bewildered, as a light; when they are in terror, as a power; when they are in joy, as a glory." And we all know that when we are inwardly true to that high calling, there is comfort in the midst of misunderstanding; there is patience before opposition; there is steadiness and courage in all bewilderment. We do not add God to a sincere life; we only realize more fully that He is there at the heart of it. "The pure in heart shall see God."

What we have been saying in this and the previous chapter should emphasize the fact, so often spoken of in religion, that we are not simply seeking God but are being sought by Him. In all this activity that draws us as individuals into an "altogether" life, that seeks us out when we refuse to grow and holds our loyalty fast to the claim of untried possibilities, infinitely better than our best, we meet with the experience which is called the "divine constraint."

## 5. CHRIST'S REVELATION OF GOD

### *Why is love significant?*

In another chapter we suggested how man joins with God's creative activity on various levels, and so develops a religious quality in his life. It was Jesus who made us realize that the highest form of creative action is that of love which alone can overcome selfishness, win affection, and lift people into courage and sacrificial devotion. Certainly this is as important a power as anything we know.

To be sure, in the relations of groups and classes and nations, such love seems to have little chance of exercising its influence today. The pressure of self-interest and economic necessity seem to be forcing the action in these larger areas of life. Of this we shall speak later, but we must not let the mass movements of men conceal from us the central importance of a quieter and not less significant influence that plays a leavening and transforming part beyond all calculation.

### *Is love anything more than a human influence?*

If we had not met with anything but human powers and resources, we never would have thought of God at all. But we have discovered that there is an administration of this universe which is more than human and which carries final responsibility for the highest possibil-

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ities that are available. Once we recognize this fact, we see that our human life is connecting with God's activity wherever the work of unfolding higher possibilities is going on. We make this connection on various levels of life.

For instance, our greatest mathematical minds, studying the energies at work in the evolving of our starry universe, have discovered something mathematical about this mysterious process of creation. Mathematical thinking in human minds gives our point of connection with the mathematical operation of physical energies that are part of God's given system. A leading scientist has suggested that whatever else God might be, he must surely be a mathematician. When we follow this mathematical way of human thinking, we find ourselves more and more in touch with the resources which God has in store in the realm of the physical.

So, too, with the love of beauty and harmony that we find active in human life. Here we seem to be connected with some beauty-making activity in the world around us, and through the artistic genius in men we become aware of laws of harmony built into the very nature of things by some other than human power. We know that by following this artistic sense in human beings we are more and more in touch with the infinite source of beauty.

In something the same way, Christ set men thinking

that this transforming power of love in human life connects us with the life-making activity of God. This has been expressed in all sorts of theological language. Take, for instance, the statement in the Gospel of John, using some philosophical terms borrowed from the first century: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." You can glimpse the writer's idea, if you translate the term "Word" as the divine thought or purpose, which constitutes the very nature of God and which at the beginning and all along has been responsible for whatever meaning there is in creation. That was somehow embodied in the man of Galilee and once for all made clear. It is extraordinary how the world has over and over come back to this astounding idea.

*How could God's nature be expressed in a man?*

We might rid ourselves of any notion that this is an impossible thing to believe. No human life could, of course, express the whole nature of God, but if the nature of God is a nature of thought or purpose, there is no reason why that could not be revealed in human life,—at least enough of it to give us a clue by which we could go on to deeper and deeper understanding. Men like Bacon, or Newton, or Pasteur, could embody for us some of the universal truth that is in the nature



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of the physical part of God's universe; and Beethoven, or Rembrandt, could embody for us some of the universal beauty and harmony. If lives like these mediate fragments of the meaning which lies in the mystery around us, it is certainly permissible to think that in the historic order of life there should appear a man who incarnated the thought or purpose which was the very nature of the creative power and which could give to all the fragments an ever growing meaning as the centuries passed.

If one asks why one man, and he a peasant, should have been picked out for such an extraordinary revelation, it might be answered that nobody knows—any more than we know why Praxiteles was picked out to show the world, once for all, some of the possibilities of beauty that lay in the art of sculpture. This is the way of creation. Lives here and there are given to reveal, once for all, some clue to life by which men forever after live.

In view of this, let us see what this "Word" was that became embodied. There is one unmistakable impression which Christ's life has left upon the world—that of *intelligent love devoted to excellence and seeking at any cost to impart life*. When you come to think of it, the most creative power we know anything about is just that. Intelligence alone, without love, has proved a destructive thing in our human sphere, and cold intellect has lacked the power to impart life. Also, love without intelligence has proved weak and sentimental. Real achievements

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come where intelligent devotion to excellence carries men on and on toward something more perfect in an infinite direction. And, if this is to be effective in the fullest sense, there must be added a passionate solicitude for human lives. By this combination of intelligent love devoted to excellence and seeking at any cost to impart life, more can be done in the world than by any other means. This notion of creative power is the greatest conception which has yet dawned upon the mind of man. It is the priceless heritage of our faith which has come down to us through twenty centuries, and we might well reconsider it in a world where there is no one to whom we can go for a more promising clue to the meaning of life.

In a later chapter we will consider how this bears upon the problem of saving men from the conflicts and consequences and "inner shrinkage" of a selfish life.

## CHAPTER VII

### TRADITION AND AUTHORITY

#### I. REVELATION

##### *What is the use of religious tradition?*

It offers what a scientific tradition offers a scientist. Every sensible man, in any line of learning, takes advantage of all that has been found out and tested. All sorts of religious ideas have been tried and found wanting. There is no use going over all that again. But where men of deeper insight than the common throng have gained conviction that has proved true to the nature of things and true to life, we can use that conviction to see if it proves itself in our life too. We do not accept it blindly, but as something to begin with; and as it proves good we hold fast to it and go on to learn more and more for ourselves. This is what men do in science, art, literature, invention, and in all productive adventures. We should take our best tradition, not as a stopping point, but as something to sustain us in discovering things for ourselves.

Men used to say of Jesus that he spoke as one having authority. He put truth in such a way that a listener was inclined to say: "Of course, that is true to life; that is the way life teaches you as you go deeper and deeper

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into it." When any one tells you a truth which you have dimly experienced in your own living, you recognize an authority which convinces you. You are helped to see clearly what was vaguely true before. Thus we need to be fortified and enlarged by the witness of other lives. No one sees truth alone. It is a matter of seeing with other people, in varying experiences over large stretches of time.

### *What is revelation?*

We need a fresh understanding of that word "revelation." It is not like a radio message, sent into the world from outside, about some fact which was never in the universe before. Rather, revelation is but the clearer realization of some truth which has always been here but overlooked or misunderstood. When such an unrealized fact becomes plain, where men see it so clearly that they are sure something ought to be done about it, we call it a revelation. It may come in a sudden flash of insight, or by gradual increase of knowledge, or both.

When James Watt was a boy he wondered what it was that lifted the lid of the kettle boiling on the hearth. No one understood, although steam power had always been a fact right under the notice of everybody. When Watt realized, after much study and experiment, that here was one of the great given powers of the universe, and that with it something tremendous could be done to

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change civilization, the world had a revelation. That is the way all truth dawns on us. And always some individual, endowed with a peculiar sensitiveness and prepared by work, *sees* the truth for everybody else.

*Why do we begin to see truth that we never knew was there?*

This is an old question. Plato long ago was troubled by this problem of the way we start to know what we did not know at all. He had the curious notion that we became acquainted with everything in some previous existence, and that we simply recalled what we had previously known.

It is really simpler than that. As we said before, something going on in the universe attracts our attention and makes us aware that there is more to know. Steam lifting the lid of a kettle started Watt. The curious behavior of electrical current in a loop of wire started the thinking that led to the invention of the dynamo. The reality already there starts and stimulates the curious mind. The man who cultivates his mind to understand facts in a particular field, taking advantage of older authorities on the subject, sees more meaning where the ordinary mind sees nothing at all. He puts two and two together, lives with the facts and with accumulated knowledge, and then makes his new theory about what is happening before him. The theory may be inadequate,

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but he tries it to see how it works. Something in the nature of things shows up where he is right and where he is wrong. He is corrected and led on to new awareness of more to know, like the Chinese farmers who went on the theory that they could eat all their big potatoes and keep the small ones for seed, until they had sense pounded into their heads by the way nature reduced all their potatoes to the size of marbles.

Thus in all lines of learning we have made advances. No authority tells us the whole, infallible truth; nor do we depend on mere guesses. We are bumped into by some activity that exists quite independent of what we think, and thus we are stimulated in our thinking and appreciation. Using what authorities in the past have learned, and living with the facts at hand, we make up our minds with the best insight we have. We then try our idea where life can check us up and pound more sense into us and show us where there is more to learn. This has proved the most fruitful way of getting hidden truth revealed.

*Does religious revelation add anything entirely new?*

It gives only fresh understanding of what has always existed. If there be any God at all, He was not added to the universe from outside at a particular time. Whatever His activity, it must always have been here, though un-

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recognized and misunderstood. Revelation is the dawning of fresh insight into the divine, life-giving activity which is ever acting upon us and to which we have to adjust ourselves.

Men started thinking about God because experience made them aware of power and authority greater than humanity possessed. They did not make up the idea of God just for the fun of it, or because they liked the comfortable idea, as some moderns have asserted. Being aware of more than human responsibility for all that was happening, men made their crude theories of what that superhuman power was like. As they tried out their ideas in life, the nature of things revealed where their insights were inadequate and where there was more to learn. All along, individuals who were particularly sensitive and prepared proved more receptive to the truth than the conventional crowd.

For instance, experience showed that the idea of many separate gods over different tribes or races was not in harmony with the fact that all the powers of nature and the laws of life ignored national boundaries. Men like the Hebrew prophets, whose moral sensitiveness was more developed, were impressed by this fact more than were the common people. Hence they were accused of disturbing religion as commonly accepted. We recall that the Athenians, trusting in their mythical gods, used to say of Socrates: "There is the atheist who believes in

only one God." The men who thus *saw* ahead of the crowd were called "seers" or "prophets." The truth came to them as something that was not their own invention, and they indicated this by their graphic phrase "Thus saith the Lord." The stimulus for that better vision did come from beyond man. Thus religion has always claimed that God does not merely wait for us to learn, but takes the initiative in seeking to make his way known.

### 2. REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

#### *Has the Bible a miraculous guarantee?*

We should understand the Bible better if we would read it as naturally as we read any ancient literature which has lasted because of its worth. If we take the Bible just as it stands, without forcing any artificial interpretation upon it, and let it say what it says, we will best understand what it is worth.

Within these covers is not a single book, but a collection of different types of literature produced by the Hebrew people, over a period of several thousand years. The whole compilation is dominated, like the national life of this peculiar people, by the religious interest.

It is as though, in one volume, we had preserved all the English literature of all types, which reflected our most characteristic thought and feeling at different stages of our growth: early folk tales, stories of fabled heroes,



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histories written by authors of different schools of thought, philosophical writings, some drama and poetry, collections of favorite hymns and prayers, a treasury of proverbs, sermons and addresses by spiritual and moral leaders, biographies and letters of our most influential men. Such a collection would not be read as though it were written by one man at one time. It would be more like a cross-section of the thought and life of centuries.

The Bible is such a cross-section of life over a long period. There is no attempt to excuse primitive customs that were later outgrown, no apology for outworn beliefs and hideous practices in the name of early religion, no embarrassment over miraculous stories that defy all science, no disguising national prejudices and contradictory thoughts about God. Within these pages one can find conceptions of religion and character that range from the lowest and crudest up to the highest our race has known. The process of growth and outgrowth is evident all along. Everything in this collection that foreshadows the truth which appeared in Christ is of priceless worth and bears the mark of inspiration. And everything here that is inconsistent with his kind of life and with any discovered facts is part of an ancient life which has been outgrown. Even so, the outgrown ideas and practices are still interesting as a record of the road along which God brought people toward the light.

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The importance and permanence of these writings cannot be explained by some artificial theory of their origin and composition. Coleridge once said: "There is more in the Bible that finds me at deeper depths in my being than in any book in the world." That is the only reason why the Bible keeps on living. Growing insights into the meaning of life and of God are scattered through these pages, and people find the truth here that "finds" them and proves true to all that life teaches when you live it. The well-thumbed edges of some old saint's Bible show the familiar parts of the book where, as by common consent, some truth was clarified that had always been extant but unrealized or misunderstood. If the best parts of the Bible did not "find" people thus, no theory about its inspiration would do any good, for no one would want to read it.

### *Why treat the Bible in an unnatural way?*

It has been supposed that religious truth needed to be protected from any possible error. Men did not realize that all truth can stand on its own feet and prove its worth by the way it fits into the nature of things. They wanted therefore some unusual authority to support their religious convictions.

Most of our troubles in religion have come from this attempt to make the Bible the infallible support of all

sorts of religious views. The famous Jewish philosopher, Philo, in the first century A.D., propounded the theory that the first five books of the Jewish Bible were literally dictated by God, word for word, and that man's part was simply to receive the dictation. This mechanical theory was applied to the whole Old Testament and later was taken over by Christians and extended to the New Testament. Most of the doctrinal and ecclesiastical fights of history have sprung from this way of treating the Bible.

For instance, in the controversy following the Reformation, a professor of Utrecht claimed that every word in scripture was infallibly inspired, the punctuation not excepted; and so all kinds of doctrines were supported by appeal to infallible texts of the Bible. Doctor Ussher set going a long and bitter controversy, lasting until today, when he claimed that the book of Genesis was a scientific treatise from which we could learn that woman was made from the rib of a man four thousand years ago at a late hour in the afternoon; while a Lutheran bishop in the seventeenth century took this same book of Genesis to be a theological treatise which, he affirmed, "was an arsenal of arguments against pagans, Jews, Turks, Tartars, Papists, Calvinists, and Baptists." But the book of Genesis as it stands makes no pretence to scientific accuracy, for it was written ages before scientific knowledge was available; and as for Baptists, it was as innocent of any knowledge of them as a new-born babe.

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*Why should we go back to so ancient a book?*

The life in this book is the soil out of which much of our present thinking has grown. We can no more escape from it than we can escape from our ancestors. Our western civilization has been nourished on the thoughts which were inspired by the reading of this literature. We are not the children of the Hindu scriptures nor of the Koran. Here is our heritage, and to neglect our spiritual rootage is like bringing up artists on the paintings of the modernists with no reference to the great masters. A history professor in a great university recently said that one of the criminal defects in education has been the neglect of the study of this literature because of its so-called sacredness. It has been reserved for "sacred studies" on Sundays. The fact is that through the channel of this Hebrew race there came a contribution to human living which has had a wider effect on all levels of human society than any other racial contribution in history.

Intelligent religion is suffering today from lack of rootage in its own history. People are picking up their religious notions from passing thought. Scripture has an old-fashioned sound, and they want to be up to the minute. But being up to the minute is the surest way to be superficial. Thus we become prey to the latest fads and fashions of thought and are blown about by every wind of opinion. Any one who has learned to listen to the

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centuries and so revise the popular thought of the moment, lives by a steadier judgment. We have seen enough of the futile vagaries of free-lance thought in religion, unsteadied by knowledge of the past. Just as the literary sense of the English race has been cultivated, not by reading the latest book from the press, but by acquaintance with Shakespeare and Milton and Keats, so the religious sense of our civilization must ever be nourished by contact with lives and authors whose growth was rooted in these ancient writings which have helped make us what we are.

### 3. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE BIBLE

*How does one know what to trust in the Bible?*

This might best be answered by another question: How do you tell what is true and reliable and worthwhile in any literature? The same intelligent tests apply here as elsewhere.

In general, that means trusting the judgment of scholars on all matters of historical accuracy. Thus only can we learn how this record tallies with other historical reports, where legend leaves off and historical matter begins, and how much is to be allowed for the point of view of the writer recording the event. When it comes to the oldest stories, which came down by word of mouth from the dawn of history, we must use the same common sense which we use in reading the folk tales of

any ancient people, recognizing the growth of material around some original character or event. As for the ideas about life and character and God which we find developing in this history, we must judge the more primitive ideas by the more mature, seeing the significance of the early beginnings in the later results which grew out of them. Whatever is of permanent worth will be repeatable; that is, we can try it out in life for ourselves and let it justify its value in the only way we test the worth of ideas which we find anywhere else. Whatever is good for life and true to the nature of things will always survive the test of time.

*What is genuine in the Old Testament?*

Take everything in the Old Testament as a genuine sample of some stage in the development of thought from a primitive to a higher level. Every story, every tradition, every historical experience of this race of people, even a mythical tale, is a true sample of the ideas which emerged at various stages while they were being shown where more truth still lay ahead.

There, for example, is that quaint story of Noah and the Ark. Certainly this is a true piece of primitive imagination dwelling upon some ancient disaster. It was supposed that when people became a nuisance they should be killed off. The flood apparently indicated that this was God's attitude toward disobedient humanity.

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That same crude idea is still with us in such relics of barbarism as capital punishment and our war psychology. This primitive story shows plainly to what period of antiquity some of our modern morality really belongs. In this same story appears also a hint of a dawning idea that, with one good man, God can remake the world. That is a real idea expressed in a picturesque form. It has proved to be of permanent worth and true to life. Perhaps, unconsciously, this is what endeared this story to its hearers, who thus began learning the importance of a "remnant" minority standing for truth in a false world. Whenever the world has gone hopelessly bad along some line, God has often used one man, a mere remnant, to stand with Him for what ought to be. The hope of democracy and of the whole world runs back to this age-old conviction that "God and one man are a majority."

### *What is genuine in the New Testament?*

There is one thing historically sure about the New Testament. It is a first-hand record of the impression which Christ left upon other lives in that first century.

The impression a man leaves is more significant than a snapshot photograph. Our idea of Lincoln's spirit is not gained from his pictures, but largely from impressions he made upon people. We may be doubtful of some of his sayings, and some of his stories may be proved

wrongly attributed to him, but the effect he had upon people is so definite that it is one of the greatest forces in our history. An ignorant colored slave could help us understand what Lincoln was like, even though the slave believed in evil spirits and held that the world was flat.

In the New Testament we are getting an impression of Jesus as it comes to us through other men's minds. We should expect to see in the picture some of the color of the minds through which it comes. In the house on top of Mt. Tom, in Massachusetts, a fine old gentleman used to show the western horizon of the Berkshire foothills through a window that had four panes of differently colored glass. You got an impression of the same landscape through each pane, but through the blue you had the look of winter, through the brown a touch of autumn, through the green a hint of early spring, and through the red a reminder of a summer sunset. The New Testament writings show the ancient Jewish color in what is said about evil spirits and angels, and the opening heavens; about the judgment day, the millennium, and the end of the world; and in all that tendency to connect Jesus with the miraculous. We are not supposed to accept unmodified all these picturesque Jewish beliefs which were quite natural in an unscientific age. Our ideas about these things have changed with the growth of knowledge and experience. But through all



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this local color of old beliefs, we can see clearly the impression of Christ's spirit upon the people of his day. We can keep that without subscribing to all the primitive views of the world current in the first century. We can read the letters of a man like Paul, with scarcely a reference to what Jesus said or did, and learn what such a man is like when utterly possessed by the spirit of the Master. All the religion of the New Testament that is worth keeping for today, all that is repeatable and testable, is centred in the spirit revealed in Christ and experienced over and over by men who were transformed by his touch.

### 4. THE MIRACULOUS IN THE BIBLE

*What shall we think of the miracles recorded in the Bible?*

We have sought to make plain that scientific knowledge has not diminished our expectation of the apparently impossible and the uncalculated. It has increased our faith in possibilities that may emerge as we know more of the laws of the universe. It has even strengthened our confidence that creation may reshape old elements into new results that are miraculously different from the elements. But all this we expect in the regular nature of things, and not as a magical exception "breaking" a law.

With regard to Bible times, we should reverently re-

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member that the regularity of nature was not understood then as it is today. In those days the order of nature seemed like that of a man who was always to be met walking down the same street every day. That was the usual thing, but it did not prevent the man from walking down another street on some special errand. So men thought of nature's regularity. If God wanted to go out of the usual way to do a special favor, it seemed a perfectly natural thing to expect. In fact anything unusual appeared as an interposition of God who was not so noticeable in the regular run of affairs.

As knowledge grew, the regularity of nature proved to be more rigid, so that it could be reduced to laws, with no exceptions at odd times and for special reasons. Miracles of magic, contrary to law, were no longer expected. When it came to the Bible stories, men for long tried to make an exception, and the church was put in the unfortunate position of arguing that God worked by miraculous ways in Bible times and then changed to more natural methods for the rest of history. But soon it became apparent that the miraculous cropped up in all ancient religions. It was also noticeable that miracles grew in wonder the farther their reporting was removed from the event. Curiously enough, we had overlooked the fact that none of the great prophets in their own words claimed to be wonder-workers; neither Buddha, nor Mohammed, nor Confucius, nor Christ, relied upon

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miraculous power. It was attributed to them by men who wrote about them. And Christ constantly claimed that signs and wonders were of no advantage in religion. As time went on it became plain that to have God work miracles contrary to law could add nothing to morals, nothing to the development of human abilities, and nothing to our understanding of the ways of the universe. Miracles according to law were proving quite sufficient for human needs.

### *Are the Biblical miracles trustworthy?*

They are all trustworthy samples of the way people explained events in a pre-scientific age. It is time we taught this frankly to children. The Bible will not lose anything by our being honest with it. What is worth while for us in this book has little to do with the kind of miracles that do not happen any more, like the axe-head floating on water, the sun standing still, and live men in a fiery furnace.

We can still appreciate Christ's spirit even if some natural events in his life may have grown into miracles, such as the feeding of the five thousand or walking on the water. Some Bible stories—the most primitive—are precious old folk tales of the Hebrew people. Some are interpretations of unusual events. Some are descriptions colored by the observer who saw everything through the unscientific eyes of the first century. Men watching a

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demented person, hysterically shouting as Jesus sought to bring him to his right mind, and seeing a herd of swine frightened into a stampede by the noise, might very easily interpret the event as an instance of evil spirits passing out of the afflicted man and seeking refuge in the animals, who were hurried to their death over a cliff. Good psychology might explain what Jesus did to restore sanity to this troubled mind—it is done today—but through the eyes of a first-century observer it all looked like a miraculous transaction with the world of spirits. The influence of a personality like that of the Master, stimulating faith and repose and courage, could account for healing miracles which are repeatable in our own age.

As for such a story as that of the virgin birth, all sorts of views prevail. At least we can agree that this way of explaining uniqueness, current in ancient times, was applied to Jesus because it was impossible then, as it has been ever since, to explain the mystery of the sudden appearance in history of a character so utterly unique that he has swayed the evolution of the human race for two thousand years, with an influence that seems as permanent as God.

An event like the resurrection may be described in ways that confuse us. It may all appear in a new light as we advance in psychical research; but no settlement of this question, one way or another, can affect the fact

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that a grave in Palestine could not prevent Christ from becoming a permanent part of the order of life. No question about any miracle in the Bible need affect any one's real faith in God, nor diminish in any way the worth of the spirit revealed in him whom men have been willing to call their Lord.

### 5. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

*In what way is Christ an authority?*

Some time ago there appeared a novel entitled *The Unearthly*. The chief character was a Jew whose Christ-like life exercised an irresistible, transforming power over all about him. Another character in the story says of him: "There is mystery in that man. When I am with him I feel as if I were with the whole past and the whole future. He is like continuity choosing to make a temporary home in a man." That kind of life or spirit, call it what you will, appearing in Christ and in all Christ-like souls, is something that belongs to the ages. The crucifixion did not defeat it. Unceasingly its power persists like a continuous, living spirit, forever re-emerging to make a home in all sorts of people, seeking embodiment in the very life of mankind. Under the sway of that spirit men find themselves most free from conflict with their lower nature, most able to prove their worth in any calling, most able to face trial with fearless confidence, most ready to suffer for others without bitter-

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ness, and enjoying a satisfaction and a peace that has the feel of something eternal and out of reach of the interference of this world. The truth of all this we do not get by haggling over texts and passages in the Bible, and trying to explain miracles; but by living with people who have shared the experience and by repeating it in our own lives.

Like Watt, who revealed in steam something that had always been here but unrecognized, Christ has made us aware of a life-power which has always been here but which is only slowly being understood and tried. Through him lies a way to relate ourselves to the source of a life which may be abundant beyond our human reckoning. If linking ourselves to such a source is religion, then this man has been proving himself a way to connect with the life-giving reality which we call God. This fact is deeper than any words that describe it.

### *Is Jesus' way final?*

Among the early followers of Christ it was customary to speak of their religion as "The Way." Taken from Christ's own words, "I am the way," this name suggests what men have ever found in him: no fixed rules of living in any particular situation, but the way to find more life in new situations all along; no final creed, but the way to find more and more of the meaning of God as we grow; no proof of God, but the way to find what

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divine power may do in the life of the world. He represents a way of finding, but not all there is to find. The man of science who showed us how to understand the laws of nature did not give us all there was to know. He set us on the way of knowing. He furnished us the clue by which we could go on forever in our learning. Christ was the world's great specialist in a knowledge of God and reality which can be gained only by the way of love. It does not exclude other ways of gaining knowledge. Those who have taken him as their clue and committed life to him have discovered facts and meanings and possibilities in life which could not be found by reason alone, nor by science alone. He represents a way of finding which is in conflict with no other and which belongs in the very nature of things. The way of love cannot take the place of intelligence, for intelligence is required in the application of love, more so every day; but intelligence never gets a proper direction unless it is following this way of unselfish love.

This is why Christ's way, old as eternity, still holds its place today, while social orders change and philosophies come and go, and the views of science have their day and cease to be. It is a way of learning as proper to the twentieth century as it was to the first, and no advance in knowledge can displace it. It is a way which little children can begin to understand and which the wisest men may miss. It is a way that can be shared in friend-

liness by those who differ in experience and thought. Follow this way far enough and we will find what great men have described as fellowship with God. And because fellowship with the infinite life of God is an inexhaustible adventure, we will always have the feeling of more to know and be, and we must never insist that our experience of the way is the end of the road. We should not condemn any man if he cannot go with us as far as we think he should. We must welcome any sign that he is on the way. No forcing will do him any good. Follow this road far enough and we shall understand anew that overwhelming discovery which the apostle Paul expressed in words that will never die:

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in



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part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."



*PART II*

PERSISTENT PROBLEMS

## FOREWORD

### *Part II*

*The second portion of this book is devoted to the problems which arise as one attempts to live by the faith discussed in Part I. Since the chapters deal separately with topics having little connection one with another, save as a common point of view unites them all, there is no progression in the treatment other than a shift of emphasis from individual life in the first chapters to our social life in the last chapters. This loose design is followed in order to cover the questions most commonly asked, and at the same time permit the reader to pass over any sections where the thought does not bear upon his particular case.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### FINDING THE RIGHT LIFE

THE religious confusion of recent years has resulted in a serious moral perplexity. It extends from our individual life far out into the practices of the social order, where we find our private lives involved in a public life of baffling contradictions. This has left people everywhere wondering about the standards of behavior and the supports for morality. The problem of what life means, what one's individual life is for, what is worth seeking, has become acute alongside the larger difficulty of adjusting oneself to a code of public behavior, which, at so many points, is in flat contradiction to our personal ideals. In this chapter we will consider the personal issues, and come to the more public matters later on.

#### I. CONSCIENCE

##### *What is conscience?*

Men have always wondered how God could give us some supernatural certainty about what was right and wrong. If conscience is the voice of God, actually speaking to us and telling us what to do in detail, then it seems to have misled us at various times and places. We have had such a different conscience in different

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ages, declaring what was the will of God. An ardent militarist recently declared that his conscience told him that God approves of war, except in cases of aggression. He supported his conscience by quoting from a Bible passage which runs: "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting *arms*." Yet despite this man's certain conscience, there are a growing number of people whose consciences are equally sure that God does not approve of war. So conscience has differed about slavery, and it is quite at sea today about the ethics of our commercialized world and many moot questions of self-indulgence. We have all weathered periods of life when we wanted God to tell us definitely what to do, but had to make up our own minds in the end. We have seen devoted people doing some very queer things under the impression that God told them to do so.

This uncertainty is a dangerous thing. When we are uncertain about our beliefs, we may delay making a final judgment until we have more light; but in deciding what to do, we have to make some decision whether we are certain or not. For no decision, as some one has said, becomes a very real decision after a time.

Refuge from this state of affairs has been sought in a practical morality which favors the utmost personal freedom consistent with living in organized society. That is, test your conduct by the question, "What is the harm; will this 'get by'?" That of course opens a rather broad

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road. Since most men cannot tell what is best for organized society, they take a chance on going as far as they dare, until they see what the harm is. That is the popular morality of multitudes. But there is a fly in this ointment. When people are thus headed toward the questionable they forget that if they wait until they see the harm, they will go too far before the harm appears, and then it is too late.

*The consequences of life work out slowly.* Here is an illustration. Two small boys were left at home on a Sunday. They discovered in the cellar a jar of doughnuts, freshly made. Discussing the prospect, they decided that there would be no harm in taking one. The first one proved so harmless, that they decided to take another. Why should one doughnut be more harmful than another? So they continued until they finished the contents of the jar. But an hour later, nature began to demonstrate that somewhere they had passed the danger point without knowing it. They could not tell just which doughnut was the guilty one, for all looked alike. The victims were lured on by the question "What's the harm?" and found the answer only when it was too late. So with all expediency.

Certainly there is no indomitable drive in this prudent morality which will carry us up toward the higher ranges of life that are a long climb from the animal. We shall later see that there is a curious perversity in the opposite

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direction, when we follow inclination and the principle of "getting by."

### *Where do we find moral certainty?*

That is found where each of us faces the certainty of *more that he ought to be*. No argument can undermine this curious imperative that lays hold on every one of us — "There is more that you ought to be."

Some have said we should be rid of this word "ought." But that is like saying we should rid ourselves of gravity, because it so often pulls us in a direction where we may not for the moment be inclined to go. Something there is from beyond us forever insisting on more that ought to be. Conscience is not like an information window at a station, where God will dictate in detail what train we are to take. In the midst of our imperfections there is this sensitiveness to more life that might be a part of us, and of which we ought to be a part. This awareness of more that claims us is the most mysterious thing about our life. If there is any point where we are dealing with an influence other than our own will, it is here. God is not something *added* to this.

## 2. VARIABLE ELEMENTS

### *Why does the right seem to vary?*

Because more life for you in your day is a different thing from more life for your grandmother in her time



## VARIABLE ELEMENTS

and with her gifts. It is not possible to impose a fixed pattern of more life on everybody. That is what Puritanism at its worst (not at its best) tried to do. The revolt against this practice of imposing one man's pattern of life upon another was quite justified. It is reported that Emerson once said that you never should try to make another person like yourself, because you know, and I know and God knows that one like you is enough.

*How can each of us tell where he ought to find more life?*

It is all a question of making yourself more sensitive. On a fine day in spring a man met a friend on the street and waxed enthusiastic over the lovely day. He was answered with the curt reply, "I hate spring; it is too raw." "Well," said the other, "summer will soon be here." And again came a curt answer, "I hate summer; it's too hot." The suggestion was made that he probably liked the winter months, but no, winter was too cold. There was a man so wrapped up in his own feelings that he was insensitive to all the glory of the seasons. One may become like that toward life.

A man who practises giving his best to the next thing he has to do, has *revealed* to him better things waiting to be done. A man who meets a need well, is somehow *shown* more needs that he might meet. Who-

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ever seeks truth, sincerely and devotedly, is always being made aware of more truth to discover.

We do not *add* God to this experience. Here we meet with His way of leading upon which we depend. If sometimes we make an unwise choice in this direction (and there is always left us a margin of choice) we may find ourselves on a detour. But if there is sincerity and humility and devotion, we are led back to the main road with some knowledge of life that compensates in part for the mistake.

### *How can you ever define a good man?*

You cannot, except to say that a good man is one who is always trying to see where he can be more of a man than he is. There is *no fixed standard or pattern of goodness*. It is an advancing standard. Your ideas of what is good should enlarge as you move on and up. Each of us is beginning to find out a little of what a good life might be. Our generation is discovering where life may be good along new lines which our forefathers never realized. The Pharisee of Jesus' day was the type of man, recurring in all ages, who wanted a standard of goodness which was settled and put down in black and white. When you fulfilled the written requirements, you had finished. Jesus was ever insisting that real righteousness exceeded this fixed and limited attainment. "Blessed

are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness" was his description of vital goodness.

*May people identify the right with present attainment?*

Easily. We do not often abandon our ideals but we stop short of them on some comfortable level where we may look below to the less advanced and say, "Thank God I am not as other men." This arrested kind of goodness, which makes people satisfied with what they are and censorious of others, blocks the world's progress on every hand. It was this sort of standardized, stagnant goodness which saw in Jesus a dangerous character upsetting the established order of things. Behind this righteousness, which has stopped on a respectable level, lie the sins of war and commercial selfishness and racial prejudice and all the pious hypocrisy which retards progress in each generation.

*Does the right ever become wrong?*

That has happened and it is bound to happen again. Yet there may be, in all such change, something right all along. An English philosopher has given us an illustration which puts the matter thus. It is right for a man to be loyal to his family instead of caring for himself alone, but his family interest can best be cared for when the

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community is kept decent for everybody. Thus family interest is right, and yet not right without a wider community interest. And the community interest is not safe unless the nation is secure; so that community interest is right, and yet not right unless it is supplemented by patriotism. Now we are learning that a nation is not secure unless our international life is carried beyond a mere fighting basis; so that patriotism is right, and yet not right unless it is broadened and fulfilled by international relationship. Yet the idea that a man should identify himself with more lives than his own was right all along. As one follows an advancing standard of relationships, the smaller relations are taken up and preserved in the larger. The early stages become wrong only as they prevent advancement to the larger life.

In real goodness, the central thing is our connection with some tireless movement making us aware of grander possibilities to which our life seems to belong. We do not add God to this, we need only realize that here we are dealing with His upward tending activity.

### 3. FIXED ELEMENTS

*Is there anything fixed about a good life?*

Yes; most decidedly. There is a way along which we find less and less life, and a way along which we find more and more. Through all ages, through all conditions, and with all individuals this direction to more life

has been the same. The line of advance has been from a narrow self-interest of infancy out to an interest that includes that of other lives; and from domination by purely physical interests up toward the higher satisfactions of the mind and spirit.

Most of us could agree that Lincoln found this direction. His life advanced beyond his first interest to improve himself, in the direction of identifying himself with the life of the whole nation, until he became what Emerson called an "entirely public man," with the troubles of twenty million people on his heart and mind and their thoughts articulate on his tongue; and he rose from interest in his physical strength to a love of humanity with which no one could interfere and a devotion to the right that every one could share. As he centred on the higher interests, they somehow absorbed and satisfied and used the lesser interests of his life. Had he centred on the lower interests they never could have satisfied the nobler part of him, and that would have starved until he became restless and weary of life.

It was to this eternal truth that Jesus referred when he spoke of a narrow, straight way leading to life, and a broad, easy, much-followed way leading to destruction of life. This has been settled and arranged, not by human ingenuity, but by some ultimate authority which is beyond human power. We do not *add* God to this; we recognize here that we are dealing with His arrange-

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ment and adjusting ourselves to His scheme for the enlargement of life. We can tell to a certainty whether we are preferring the low road toward less life, or the high road toward more. When a crisis that forces a choice arrives, we prefer one way to the other. "We cannot serve two masters." We see ourselves either tending back toward the animal level, or up toward heights of the mind and the spirit. As Browning said, the moments are not denied us

"When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from the false ones,  
And apprise us if pursuing,  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To our triumph or undoing."

### *Are the interests of the "flesh" bad?*

This question is best answered by an illustration. Consider an imaginary line drawn through your life, so that you see below the line all that belongs to the physical part of you, and above it whatever belongs to that part which is not the same as the physical. Of course life cannot be cut in two this way. It is one and indivisible, with parts all working together as a whole. We live a life that is physical, mental, and spiritual, all at once. However, for the sake of clearness consider that imaginary line. Below it is your bodily strength, and above it the thinking power which you call mind. Below the line is physical

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growth, above it that other kind of growth of mind and character. Under the line is the business of getting things, to wear, eat, and play with; above it there is the infinite business of being a person. Also underneath is the use of force that compels, and above the power of influence that wins. Below, are the innocent, time-filling diversions and satisfactions of physical desires, which give a temporary thrill of pleasure and then fade out, leaving you almost where you were before; above are the enduring satisfactions which come from inexhaustible interests like music, literature, art, the study of nature, friendship, co-operation, and all creative activity, which leave life permanently enriched.

Now, note the significance of that imaginary division. The part below the line is what we share with the animal most completely. It is good in its place. Our whole life is rooted in it. There is not a single thing there that we could do without. But all of it has a limited, temporary nature, good to be used in the service of more lasting interests, yet disappointing when used as the main end of life. The body grows and then stops; there is an end to getting things, and their satisfaction is short-lived and tantalizing; there is a decided limitation to what force can do in handling people; and all the physical pleasures and thrills, like the satisfaction of a good dinner, are not only exhausted in a short time, but they cannot be shared with other people.

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The life above the line has an infinite, sharable, and lasting quality. There is no boundary to thinking power or the adventure of being a person; the growth of mind and character opens out into endless possibilities. No one can put a stop to what influence may do; and when we taste the satisfaction of friendship or artistic creation, share thought through literature, or produce something new in any line of life, we find an enjoyment which extends and deepens and never wears out. If the life below the line ministers to and prepares us for this life above the line, it is in its right place, and is good. But when it interferes with and takes the place of the higher kind, it cramps and perverts the life which we were supposed to live, and so becomes our enemy.

The whole movement of the human race has been a struggle up from this lower level of life that we share with the animal, toward this higher, permanent, and endless life which can subordinate and master the physical. In this loftier reach of our existence our living opens out into the infinite; joins on, as it were, to a vaster life beyond the bounds of our individuality. In that wider range we all find the region in which we really live. Words are inadequate to describe this, but what religion has meant by union with the infinite God in a fellowship of the spirit is not something entirely different from this experience which we all know, at least in part.



## THE NATURAL TEST

### 4. THE NATURAL TEST

*Why should we feel obliged to do what we do not desire to do?*

What men have called "supernatural morality" has spoken of this obligation after this fashion, "You ought to please God." The implication was that if you did not, the wrath of God was stirred against you. That way of thinking arose in pre-scientific days, when men's minds were steeped in the ideas of absolute monarchy. It was based on the age-old fact that there is something in this universe to which we cannot dictate, but which dictates to us. This something was pictured as an omnipotent God who could do as He pleased, and who expected men to do as He pleased, since He created them. He was jealous of His honor, and His wrath was visited upon any who slighted the laws of His Kingdom.

However this conception may have served to steady the life of men, it left one perilous heritage. It created the impression that morality was something imposed on us from the skies, like an arbitrary rule and restraint. All sorts of interpretations as to what would please God were elaborated in one age and another. Ecclesiastics centred on religious devotion that would please Him. The Puritans emphasized obeying rules to do the same. There grew up a whole mass of conventions and proprieties which were put under the injunction, "You ought so to please God." From this imposed morality

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there came a revolt which temporarily left many thinking that we were through with morals and that each could do what was right in his own eyes.

The hard school of natural experience brings us back to an obligation which speaks to us this way: "You ought to live up to the facts." But why should you? For the simple reason that if you want to know what is possible you will have to live up to the facts,—there is no other way. Jesus put it simply: "He that doeth . . . shall know."

An amateur sailor once learned that obligation when he tried to sail his sloop across Buzzards Bay in the dark. Instead of using his chart and compass, he steered for what he thought were the lights of the harbor on the opposite shore. For an hour or more he sailed innocently on, when suddenly his friend at the bow gave a yell that chilled the marrow of his bones. Ten feet ahead was a rock as big as the boat. By quick action he just missed going to the bottom. He had mistaken the lights by which he was steering, but there was no mistaking that rock off the Hen and Chickens Reef. When he took his bearings from the real facts, he found it possible to reach his safe harbor.

### *Do facts take the place of God's authority?*

What we have said is just another way of interpreting the ancient truth that there is something in us and in

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the universe which will not conform to our will. If we do not liken God to some ancient monarch, we can still think of Him as the power, not ourselves, working in His own way for growing good through the whole order of life, using facts as part of His method for guiding us toward what is possible.

As the scientist on his level deals with the facts and lives up to them, he learns more and more of what God's will has in store for us. That is the way possibilities are revealed to him. "He that doeth . . . shall know." And in scientific realms we follow the lead of men whose dealing with facts has given them more than we possess of the sense of possibility.

So on the moral and spiritual level there are lines to follow in the development of the mind and character. The facts that underlie great living are as real as rocks in a ship's course. If we miss the facts, we miss the possibilities. And here we trust the sense of life that develops in those who, like Christ, have discovered what can be done with living. By living up to the facts they have gained a surer and surer sense of the will of God which arranges the possibilities of abundant life.

All this leads to a deepening sense of obligation which is the very core of religion and which can never be fully explained. Even in his material sphere the scientist comes upon an appeal to his personality which grips him with the certainty that he ought to be a witness to

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the truth. Not reluctantly, but eagerly, he feels that he ought to be a part of the truth-revealing enterprise of the ages. In like manner, those who in another range of life have tasted some of the satisfactions of honor, and faithfulness, and shared in the solicitude for human lives, come upon this same appealing sense of obligation to bear witness to the unsearchable riches of living.

### 5. SEEKING SATISFACTION

*Is our nature to be denied?*

In all handling of human life we should recognize the fundamental *fact* that we have a positive nature which is meant to work in the direction of satisfaction and not against it.

A fisherman in the Adirondack forest once saw a large tree growing six feet off the ground on top of a huge rock. The seedling of that tree began growing in the earth that had gathered in a crack. The roots reached out where more nourishment lay and followed several dirt-filled cracks down to the earth, where they continued their search for satisfaction until the full-sized tree stood there holding the rock in a cage of roots. But on the side of the rock where no cracks offered satisfaction, no roots went forth.

So when something that might satisfy our nature quickens the force of self-expansion in us, our life starts

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driving in that direction, but in no other. The force of life, which we call will power, only moves where we see some satisfaction for our nature.

*If goodness is seeking your own satisfaction, is it not selfish?*

An imposed morality gave the impression to multitudes of people that God's will was something contrary to our nature, clamped down on our self-expansion, to make us good by restraining our desires. From this point of view, it sounds selfish when you say that the force of will only moves where there is satisfaction for our nature. But the heresy disappears when we recognize the fact that we have a double nature to satisfy. We are not just animals seeking physical satisfaction. Walt Whitman once wrote:

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so  
placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their  
sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to  
God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the  
mania of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole  
earth."

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Nevertheless, if we satisfy the animal side of us, which simply likes to get, we leave terribly unsatisfied that side of us which likes to give and create and love and co-operate and show how something more perfect may be attained. Real virtue develops only when this better side of our nature reaches out toward satisfaction, and that is in the direction of God. For He is the power not ourselves working for a growing good; and it is in the end His influence that quickens our force of self-expansion to go out in a creative direction. Life finds its true satisfaction there only, where we embody some of the creative love seeking excellence. It was Freud, the modernist, who said that our nature is such that only the good man is really free, expressing all there is in him.

### 6. FARSIGHTEDNESS AND FREEDOM

*What happens to self-interest as it becomes farsighted?*

It is the great paradox of life that when self-interest becomes farsighted enough it may be transformed, partially at least, into self-obliterating love. This fact is discovered not in argument but in living.

The scientific word for this kind of change is "integration." It has something to do with "emergent evolution,"—which only adds to the mystery. But what does integration do? Consider a motor car in this connection. Scientists have proved without a doubt that it is created

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of atoms which are nothing but electricity. Now fancy riding around on electricity. You see what integration does. It organizes electrical atoms in such a way that they are transformed into a car in which you can ride. The atoms are still there in some way, but they are part of a result which is entirely different from electricity. So everywhere creation proceeds by this integration. All sorts of elements are put together and recombined so that they are transformed, until something new emerges which is entirely different from the parts.

Now the psychologists who study personality have run across this same mystery of integration in human life. The materials of our life seem to be all physical and mechanical. You cannot open your pineal gland and find a "soul" sitting there in control of things. You cannot open your brain and find "consciousness" there working to create thoughts. Much of our action seems to be automatic, as when food sets our mouth watering. Our energy seems to be a matter of chemical changes in the food we eat. To have knowledge of these mechanics of life is necessary that we may adjust the machine when out of order. When men first talked of this, it looked as though we had no consciousness, no soul, no freedom, since we were only machines subject to chemical and physical laws. It was soon discovered, however, that when all these physical elements become organized (integrated) in more complicated ways, there emerges something en-

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tirely different from the elements. The physical and mechanical elements remain, but they are transformed into a kind of life that is conscious and can think and love and create. The change occurs as mysteriously as water becomes ice.

That is how self-interest can be a permanent part of us and yet be so transformed into self-obliteration that you would never recognize it.

We used to describe this mystery of the spiritual coming out of the physical by saying that God created man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, and now it pleases us to affirm that integration does it; but that is just another way of saying that we cannot manage creation by ourselves alone, for we are certainly not responsible for the integration.

### *How farsighted must one be in order to love?*

We require all sorts of stimulation from outside to start us off on various levels of living. Experience reveals the fact that self-interest never finds what it really wants until it sees beyond what is painless and pleasant and profitable now; beyond what the law permits now; beyond what is possible or even wanted now; clear out to an activity in this universe working toward something better than the world wants. That activity, which involves men but is over and above them, is as real as



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gravity, and is so in league with the nature of things that it is able to upset a civilization which refuses to want what it ought to want. That is what we mean by God.

### *Is our life determined or free?*

This is an ancient problem which crops up in every age. There is no simple answer to be given; but from a practical point of view it may be said that nobody has ever known just where to draw the line between what we do and that which makes us do it. No argument ever solves this problem. As some one has said, we know the difference between jumping off a dock and being pushed off by some one else. The stimulus which makes us jump of our own accord passes through our minds and is somewhat regulated in the passing; but the push from behind determines our leap in a more automatic way. In neither case would we be entirely free, without anything to determine our action, but in one case we should be more free than in the other.

All through life there never is any complete freedom. Something always sets us thinking and desiring in one direction or another. Part of this may be unconscious influence or compulsion that over-rides our will, and part of it may pass through our minds and be given a peculiar twist that is all our own. There is where our responsibility comes in—deciding how the stimulus will

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affect us. Even then our nature by its special constitution may determine our choice unconsciously—push us off the dock as it were when we are not looking. Yet we must have some kind of nature given to us; something must be fixed and arranged before we can start. All freedom depends upon conditions that are determined. What we have is a partial freedom, just enough to make us realize the fact of some final responsibility in our hands.

If we considered only the electrical atoms that determine the nature of our motor car, we would be afraid to take a ride; but if we remember that atoms can be organized into something substantial and entirely different, we know we can use the car. No less certainly it is a fact that everything which determines us can be organized into a life with enough freedom to be responsible. To live up to the fact of this responsibility is the main battle of life. We seem to be more free to do it in the morning when we are fresh, than we are towards night when we are tired and more at the mercy of nagging agitations. Our freedom “runs down” if we do not have a care. To keep free so that our life is less and less enslaved by what the world does to us is the final duty of all. Our finest example of this freedom is in Christ, who could say, after the world had done its worst to determine his career,—“In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

## HOME LIFE

### 7. HOME LIFE

There is not space to discuss in this book the many questions that arise concerning the relationships of men and women before and after marriage. We are deliberately leaving aside many mooted issues, economic and social, in order to make plain this main contention that back of the best home life and the preparation for it, are not simply human theories but *basic facts*, which we must live up to if we would reach the finest possibilities.

#### *Is love like any other pleasure of self-indulgence?*

There has always been much talk of love as though it could be treated like one of many pleasures in life. But, curiously enough, when it is dragged down to the level of every other physical indulgence it loses in significance and fades out like an illusion. The literature which exploits the predominance of sex interest also pictures this pre-occupation ending in boredom and distrust of life. This attitude toward love is to be condemned, not because it is indecent, but because it is not based on *facts*.

It is a psychological fact, which has been verified in the best life everywhere, that true sex love is not an end but a means of heightening affection between two lives committed to each other in the business of making a home, whether that home is to have children or be a

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place of companionship for two kindred spirits. Where love is not meant to increase affection between people united by other interests, and is looked upon as a mere romantic diversion, it creates a conflict in human nature, tends to disintegrate the finer qualities of personality which alone can preserve one from futility and self-disgust. A modern writer has well said, "The emotion of love is not self-sustaining; it endures only when the lovers love many things together and not merely one another. It is this understanding that love cannot successfully be isolated from the business of living which is the enduring wisdom of the institution of marriage."

The fact is that love was meant to unite the *whole* life of two people, and apart from that purpose it destroys its own glory and leads to disillusion. Sadly enough, woman is always the one to pay the worst price for turning love into a travesty.

### *Is love just a romantic accident?*

In recent years there has been much talk of marriages that fail. This has, on the whole, helped our understanding of a complicated problem, but our real interest should be in the marriages that do not fail. Here the fact emerges that lasting love between a man and woman is not at all a romantic accident (though it may begin that way), but a difficult achievement. The fervor which marks its beginning is not what carries it through.

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It is only where two lives live intimately together, committed to lasting interests in a long adventure of mutual understanding and growth, that the richest things in personality develop. Hidden qualities of life are brought out through a fellowship which only years can create; and the thoughts and ambitions of two lives supplement each other so that by mutual support two people together grow into more than each could be alone. The mutual sustaining of faith through disappointments, and the binding force of enduring satisfactions tide two partners over endless differences which might spoil a union based on accidental attractions. In such a great relation honest failures are bound to be, and provision should be made for these. But we should guard against failure before marriage by long testing of temperaments and tastes and interests, to make sure the lasting stuff is there for a life-long trial, because love is not an accident but a great achievement. To assume that some loose and easy arrangement can produce the love that lasts and makes life glorious, is arrant nonsense of the cheapest kind.

### *Why should marriage be a "sacrament"?*

The religious significance of a marriage lies in the fact that two people can really be loyal to each other only when they are each loyal to something higher. Married life is not simply a matter of adjusting the members

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of a family to each other's desires. That is an impossible task, because indulging one's own desires or yielding to another's gives no standard to live by. Family problems are best solved where there is a religious consciousness of that inexpressible excellence which is forever bringing all our desires to a higher judgment. A two-sided dispute needs this third side so that people may feel they are not yielding to each other's prejudices, but working together toward a best, which may be different from any one's particular preference.

Certainly for the children of the race, we have found nothing better than a home where one man and one woman, by this higher loyalty, have achieved a lasting relation of love. When a man and woman have brought to each other an unspoiled life with no memories to fear, and have come into that pure union where an indescribable love, with spiritual depth and not simply physical passion, transfigures their whole existence, they are in the best possible position to face the great adventure of family life where young lives of unknown capacity will look up to them for knowledge of the best way to live. Through periods of sickness and sorrow and perplexity they pull together until they understand each other so well, and depend on each other so much, that they really live one life. Such people keep young by living on in the joys of their children, and they grow rich by sharing together the expanding adventures of those whom they

## SINGLE OR DOUBLE STANDARD

send out into the world. And then when they are left alone, these two have in common the enterprises and interests which they have built up together through the years of sharing with their children; and in congenial fellowship they go on following each other's minds into new areas to be explored. Down through the later years they reap the harvest of experience which comes only to those who have walked the long path of forgiveness and loyalty and love.

Their children find inspiration and strength for all their life in the memory of two people who have loved and cared for more than personal desires through the changes of the years. One cannot have this family life and try everything else too. If conditions are against it, we can fight the conditions, make new adjustments, but we must not sell out the highest we know for a temporary indulgence. The best is worth fighting and waiting for.

### 8. SINGLE OR DOUBLE STANDARD

*Shall men and women hold to different standards?*

With the new freedom of women has come a revolt from that masculine injustice of ostracizing a woman for behavior that is condoned in a man. And on all sides we hear the question, "Why shouldn't women do what men have always done?" That sounds logical and fair; but it is dodging the real issue. Where there have been

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two standards, one higher and the other lower, why ask if we should all take the lower? What about a mutual effort to maintain the higher for the sake of all? Of course it is easier for the average man to have woman come down to his level, and it may seem exciting for some women to come down.

There was something more than custom back of that old reverence for a woman's higher standard. What is it, really, that has kept women from being too much like men? The fact is that they have been keeping guard over the helpless life of little children for our race. Of necessity they have been nearer than men to childhood, in those first few years when more is done for life than in all other years put together. In that helpless period, life absorbs impressions as a sponge takes water. That is when a child learns most, not by instructions, but by an effortless absorption from the life to which it is most constantly exposed. No one is more sensitive than a child to the false and true in character. If the finer things of life have been kept alive in our race, it is chiefly because women have held that guardianship of childhood and have been held by it to live for the future rather than the indulgence of the moment. That long dependence of a child's life on the best in womanhood is what has kept the standard where it is.

Now with childhood at stake, if we are to have a single standard, shall we all accept the coarser standard



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of the man, or shall we all together try to keep a little nearer to the standard women have so far preserved for children in a lovely home? Men no longer have the right to expect women to keep that standard alone. There must be a mutual disposition to uphold it for the sake of all concerned.

There will of course be many who do not care. But the great majority of men and women will agree with him who, having no home of his own, yet saw where the destiny of our race is mainly settled, and pointed to the child in our midst with the searching words: "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones to stumble, it were better that a millstone be hanged about his neck and that he were sunk in the midst of the sea."

### 9. THE RIGHT INCLINATION

*Why do we dislike rules of behavior?*

There may have to be rules and penalties if immature people are to be able to live together, but we must never identify these temporary rules with real living. Once two students were discussing with the head of their college the matter of college regulations. One man insisted that the college should furnish more specific rules, with more definite penalties nicely graded according to the seriousness of the offence. It was assumed that if only men could see just what they had to do and what was coming to them, they would automatically know how

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to behave. This theory was opposed with some impatience by another man, who asserted that all we needed was to realize that "if a man did not know enough to be a gentleman he would be stepped on." There you have illustrated two attitudes toward human behavior that have been in conflict from time immemorial. One depends on a pattern prescribed, the other depends on an inclination that tells a man what to do without following a pattern. One makes for respectability that is dead, the other makes for originality that is very much alive.

The revolt that forever goes on against moral standards is a revolt against goodness that has degenerated into a pattern, which is not good enough to be an outlet for all our human energy. Our capitalistic society had evolved a form of respectability from which most all moral originality had been squeezed out. There is nothing more unoriginal than this dead respectability. That is why no red-blooded person is interested in just being good, after this respectable pattern. And that is also why this lifeless goodness had become the chief peril in the world. It had left originality nothing to do except to find some safe and respectable way of doing things that were not respectable. Our world has learned on a large scale that after people conform to a pattern of respectability which is accepted by a civilization as good enough, then God only knows what devilish things they will contrive to do. Their originality occupies itself by

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inventing ways to circumvent the law and avoid honor and evade duty until we have what a recent observer has called "the crisis in character," which is more ominous than our crisis in business.

### *What can ever take the place of rules?*

Nothing but an inclination which tells a person how to be originally good without any pattern to follow. An English scholar has pointed out that the fine thing about the good Samaritan, whom Jesus described, was his originality. He was not doing something that had become the thing to do. His act was so out of the ordinary line of behavior that respectable men like the priest and the Levite did not even recognize that the deed should be done. Here was a piece of original action, all on his responsibility. "Go and do thou likewise" said Jesus—be original like that. With a right inclination a man finds things to do which no rule can prescribe. It is not an unfamiliar thing.

You find it in one form in Admiral Byrd, who is disposed to respond to unexplored areas of knowledge in order to help fill in some gaps in the growing picture of truth. Fancy trying to supply him a pattern of behavior for his years in the Antarctic! Out of his inclination will spring original action which will go beyond any prescription.

You find it again in the men whom he picks to go

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with him. In his book he told what was the final test in his choice of men: not intellectual attainment, not physical endurance, not skill,—important as all these are; the final test was a man's disposition. Would he be inclined to respond to what was most needed in any situation on that voyage of discovery, regardless of his own convenience?

We find this inclination in every good doctor, teacher, friend, or parent, disposing them to give their help in ways for which there is no pattern. In times of crisis we turn toward men who are original enough to find ways that have not been prescribed, who are inclined not toward profit and the keeping of tradition but toward seeing what is most needed in the changing situations.

### *What has a right inclination to do with religion?*

It certainly is time that Christians realized that the Master of Life centred his whole mission on this idea that the only good thing in the world was a good inclination. He did not come as a teacher of morals. Any moral pattern that would fit the conditions of the first century would be out of date today. We find that he has no definite advice for the social problems that face us in our complicated society. But he was interested in creating an inclination to head for the truth in any age of society. His words seem often impractical and ex-

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treme. They were meant to be, so that they would not appear as a pattern to follow but as illustrations of the inclination to look for what was most needed in any circumstance. Through all time that is the attitude out of which real goodness springs. His whole aim was to convince men that such an attitude puts one in line with the great will to create, which permeates this vast universe and appears in men, at its best, as love.

There is no such thing as a pattern of Christian morals, only an inclination in harmony with the Christlike will of God toward what is most needed. Those who enter deeper into this harmony find ever new and original ways of being good and fulfilling old truth with new. For such lives you can prescribe neither a fixed code nor a final creed.

## CHAPTER IX

### HUMAN HELPLESSNESS

THERE was once a little girl who said she never asked God to help her to be good, for she was sure she could be good if she really wanted to be. But that "wanting to be" is where the trouble always comes. We cannot, alone, release the best that is in us, nor, by tugging at our own bootstraps, lift ourselves to our highest levels of living. Human will power has a limit of accomplishment. We are forever running upon a curious helplessness in handling our own lives. Like sailors in a boat, we use our will power to connect with influences that do with us what we cannot do ourselves. The experience of this helplessness is as old as the race. In this chapter we will look at this truth from various angles.

#### I. THE PROBLEM OF EXPANDING SELF-INTEREST

##### *What is the gospel of self-interest?*

There generally occurs a loss of faith in genuine unselfishness wherever doubt undermines religious belief. When men cease to hold themselves responsible to God, they try to hold themselves responsible to farsighted self-interest, which becomes their guide and savior and judge.

## EXPANDING SELF-INTEREST

Here is an argument often heard from students who are attracted by radical teachings of psychology. Man is a machine driven by self-interest. We have no soul sitting inside our bodies directing affairs, but all our thought life and emotional life arise out of the physical process of the body. There is no such thing as unselfishness, gratitude, love, obligation, or God. We do what self-interest decides will make us happy and well off. It would seem that the kidnapper who wants to steal children, the financier who seeks profits regardless of honor, and the man who desires to lay down his life for a friend or a cause,—all are selfish, doing what they want to do. The only difference is a difference in degree between shortsighted and farsighted selfishness. In other words, so runs the argument, man is a calculating machine in a mechanical universe.

### *Can we ever escape from self-interest?*

In one sense, no. But there is a difference between "selfishness" and self-interest. Selfishness is a term which we apply to a person whose one narrow concern is to guard his private interest alone. By universal judgment that is despicable, and the source of most of the world's woe. But self-interest is not despicable. It is the deepest, most enduring element in our nature, for it is the "growing principle." It is nothing more nor less than the native urge to become what we are supposed to be. It is the

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undying thrust of life toward completeness. Or, to put it in another way, it is our relentless life-making force which opposes the disaster of not becoming ourselves. Here is the guardian and preserver of our identity, against all imposed standards, conventions, oppositions, and every thwarting influence which would pervert our individuality and smother the growth of our true selves. It would be the death of us if this were ever lost.

And the main point to remember is that "self-interest" is expansive, infinitely expansive. Our "self" expands and grows. In infancy our interest was entirely confined to our own impulses. Then the life of our family and friends became part of our own self. What hurt them, hurt us. As our "self" enlarged to take in a community and a nation and the world, our self-interest included much that was not within the limits of our own body. When we are absorbed in some truth waiting to be discovered, some need that must be met, or a cause that must be fought for, so that whatever concerns these things concerns us, we are living our own life when we are living for them, even though we may seldom give ourselves a thought.

To call this large kind of life "selfish" because we like to live it, implies that it is the same thing as a narrow life entirely confined to one's private whim. This is just juggling with words. Self-interest—the right to be our utmost self—continues from beginning to end, and is in



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fact pushing us on to find out how large a self we might become. The problem of extending self-interest from immediate self-concern to larger ranges of devotion and loyalty is the ancient and ever present problem of conquering "selfishness."

### *Do we still need salvation?*

After a group of students had been discussing the value of an unselfish life, one of them said: "I agree that the unselfish life is the best thing, but how do you make yourself care for it?" The arguments had all been accepted, but here was something which arguments did not touch. This person had knowledge of the right kind of life, but mere knowing did not make him care. He had will power, but making a careless life care was something which will power alone could not accomplish.

This has always been the central problem of everybody's life. There is the wide open world of art and music and knowledge; how do you make people care for it? There is the life of honor and integrity and service; how do you make people care for it? From the mission in the slums all the way up to the respectable levels of society, it is ever the same old problem. After you know what is best, how do you make yourself care for it? There is a curious helplessness at that point from which we constantly need to be rescued. It is this experience

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which underlies part of the old language about salvation.

### 2. THE TRAGIC REALITY OF SIN

*Is "sin" anything more than doing harm to ourselves and others?*

Since the threats of hell have lost their dramatic appeal to multitudes, we have been inclined to take sin more and more lightly. The breaking down of the traditional ways of talking about sin has left us adrift. One has said, "We make mistakes, we have foibles of character, we even fall into error, but we do not often sin." Sometimes we think sin is not so bad if we only dress it up nicely and make it more genteel in its method. Drunkenness and sexual looseness are wickedness in the dance halls and night clubs of the underworld, but they are just the "new morality" in our polite social circles. To some people only the most serious offenses are sin. Many conventionally good citizens may be shocked at swearing and at coarse sins of the flesh, but the sins of the mind and spirit, like lovelessness, prejudice, class pride, callousness to the life of those who make our life possible, may rest quite easily on their conscience. And a large company of folk live as though sin were a man's private affair. If it makes him uncomfortable and brings trouble, that is his lookout. One only needs to call a halt

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this side of being caught. Thinking that we can take the consequences of our sin, we assume that it is no one's business whether we indulge ourselves or not.

Note that this is all rooted in a contracted individualism that separates one's life from the larger life-process to which we all belong. Here is a man living in a world where the advantages of the universe and the resources of goodness have been sustaining his life since childhood. From his inheritance, from industry, from his contacts with books and people, from the whole order of nature, he has received everything that has helped him to be where he is. But perhaps only a little of that current of good that he has received flows through him into his surroundings. At best what he has received filters through in diminished form. Mere indifference, that innocent sin which excuses itself by the question, "What harm am I doing?" may be enough to prevent the passing on of the best in a family heritage to a new generation of children, or block the rise of new ideas that might right the wrongs of our social life. We do more than this when we grow careless and slack. There are others near by who are inclined to be like us and they unconsciously take our carelessness and multiply that. There you have the real picture of sin: a man standing in God's great creative process, with a stream of noble influence on one side pouring in from the labors and sufferings of the past, and on the other side, people

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taking from him a selfish example of living to spread it through the world. Thus may a man make himself a block in the whole creative system of God, which would use the best of each of us for the sake of all. The problem of selfishness is as serious as that.

### 3. MAN'S INNER CONFLICT

*Why are we so reluctant in following the highest?*

Nobody has ever given a completely satisfactory answer to that question. Our fathers, who believed in "original sin," felt that human nature had an evil twist in it which made man utterly unable to save himself. The doctrine may have been wrong in some ways, but it kept people from mistaking respectability for a real change of heart. No amount of "good works," done with some selfish end in view (consciously or unconsciously), were ever allowed to become a substitute for the kind of life which arose from an experience of surrender to God's will.

A great deal of modern thinking has been all too shallow on this point. This reluctance of human nature is stronger and more deep-rooted and disastrous than most people realize. It may be due to many causes. Hesitancy before what is new and untried and more difficult explains part of it. Inheritance, early environment, and the power of old habits have much to do

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with it. The strength of our animal and physical nature, conflicting with the later demands of our higher interests as they develop, may account for more. Then, too, the power of a wrong, unjust, and materialized society, warping individuals from their very birth and hampering their better instincts, must be held responsible for still more. And beneath all of these there lie the dark, unfathomable depths of the whole mystery of life, never yielding an answer to the ultimate secret of the battle between progress and resistance.

All easy-going ideals about what human nature will do are brought down to earth by this inveterate and inexplicable element of reluctance. Watch some reform that touches the purse, and see how the hateful, cruel, and unreasoning characteristics of men emerge from a cover of respectability and oppose the right.

*Why are we unable to deliver ourselves from conflicting motives?*

What complicates life is the fact that good and bad motives seem to be so inextricably mixed in our nature. This profound and baffling mystery was once for all expressed in those searching words of the apostle Paul: "The good that I would, that I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do.—Who shall deliver me?" Here we are all on common ground, ancient and modern, young and old.

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As Matthew Arnold said, when our soul mounts up  
in some fine ambition,

“The arch-fiend pride  
Mounts at her side;—  
Changing the pure emotion  
Of her high devotion  
Into a skin-deep sense  
Of her own eloquence.”

One part of you is trying to lose itself in some selfless enterprise, the other part is seeking to attract attention. One part of you is awake to the enduring interests of the mind and spirit, the other part is indulging in low temptations which have some devilish power to kill your finer appreciations.

Explanations have never helped us much out of this difficulty. About all we know is that a self-centred life, undedicated to anything greater than itself, cannot be held together or made to grow by will power alone. Over and over we must have some other influence brought to bear that can pull us together into a unity where all that is within us works toward a great end.

### 4. RELEASING HUMAN NATURE

*Is it possible to change human nature?*

Human nature does not need to be “changed.” It needs only to be released by a great devotion. Every human desire which brings us to disaster may be re-

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directed so that its energy may be used in a good cause. To remove, suppress or destroy some element in our nature, would be like eliminating some wheels in a watch in order to make it keep better time.

This becomes clear when we consider the three ways of thinking about our human nature.

(A) First there is the idea that it is bad. That idea was not introduced into our religion by the founder, but it came into the Christian tradition early. The flesh and the devil were spoken of in the same breath. Virtue was a matter of disciplining the flesh, and serving God was in large part denying desires. Salvation was rescue from our corrupt nature. A college graduate once confessed that she had come to hate God because, in youth, she had gotten the impression that He was a tyrant who always wanted His own way and never let you have yours, and expected you always to be sounding His praise. Of course there was a reason for thinking human nature needed restraint, because our nature, handled in the wrong way, can make a very hell of life.

(B) The second view of human nature is the exact opposite of the first. Our nature is essentially good. It has been perverted by traditions and environment, but would be found good in an unspoiled state of nature. That would seem to indicate that man at his best might be discovered in an African jungle. Popularity has recently been given to the optimistic view by a superficial

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reading of psychology. It has appeared that our nature, being good, need not be kept under lock and key. But when we let all desires loose they conflict with each other and make the inner life a battle-ground. Nevertheless all our instincts can be used for a good end.

(C) Now another understanding has come forward: human nature is neither good nor bad, but largely neutral. Muscle will use a knife to stab a man or to save him by an operation. Sex can degrade life or make a lovely home. Self-interest may absorb us in our own desires, or identify our life with others until we scarcely give ourselves a thought. Our equipment of living energy may work in a right or a wrong way, but as energy it must work. There is the point. Much of it may be neutral energy, but something has to be done with it, for it must go somewhere. If it is directed to a wrong outlet, it may split life into pieces. If it can be directed in the right way, it will unite and harmonize all that is within us for a good end. But the trouble lies in our directing power—that is strangely inadequate in an undedicated life.

### 5. LIMITS OF WILL POWER.

*What can will power do to transform and unite the conflicting desires of our nature?*

It has a real part to play. But will power cannot, alone, do all that is needed. An English thinker, whose atheism



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has become a by-word the world over, has admitted that in bringing up children there is one point where no amount of human will or compulsion can force the issue, *viz.*, in the matter of teaching them to love and be friendly. The only way is to expose them to fellowship with friendly people where they "catch" the right spirit. Will power can help by committing one to some experiment in doing right, and so putting him where he can be "caught." Evidently the best in life is something which we cannot manufacture by our own power alone. Let any one try to make himself an unselfish spirit, on demand, as he might rise from a chair or flex a muscle, and he will see that part of this operation is beyond his control. He depends on something besides the force of will.

### *Can will power restrain desire successfully?*

Temporarily, yes. And when nothing else avails to make us want the right, this restraint is all that can save us from hurting others or wrecking ourselves. But, nevertheless, restraining a desire is only an emergency measure. If persisted in, it is likely to make the desire stronger than ever. Once two small boys were visiting the farm of a favorite uncle and, after indulging themselves in all the obvious forms of mischief, they disappeared. When an anxious guardian asked the uncle where the culprits had gone, he replied with a twinkle

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in his eye: "Where did you tell them not to go?" The pig-pen was the forbidden place, and there, of course, they were found. Say "no" to a desire, and it becomes intensified to overcome the opposition that it meets. That is a providential arrangement, for when our desires are good, obstacles will serve only to drive us on.

It is this curious obstinacy of desire which leads us so often to two false methods of handling our impulses.

First, we may seek to *conceal what we cannot control*. We are like some householder who, at odd times when he is free from work, must attend to homely duties about his house and grounds to give a good appearance to his place. He is likely to apply his diligence on those parts that are to be "seen of men." You might be quite impressed with his neatness. But you ought to see his cellar! There he has probably dumped all unpleasant objects that he wished to have out of sight, and he would prefer to hide that subterranean region from even his best friend. Most of us have a cellar in our lives like that, where lie concealed the unpleasant parts of our nature which linger on long after we have improved the exterior which appears to the passerby. And, as we shall see, these desires that are driven under cover do not remain idle in the cellar. They breed all kinds of diseases in our moral life.

The other false method of handling our impulses is *to let them go*. If it is dangerous to restrain or conceal

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them, why hinder their expression? If an impulse is natural, why is it not right to give it exercise? That can be answered by the true story of a bull-dog who was the mascot at an aerodrome. When a great dirigible was being sent aloft, this dog, watching the men take hold of the guy ropes, decided to follow their example and have a rope to himself. Now it is the natural instinct of a bull-dog, when he sinks his teeth into anything, to hold on against all persuasion to the contrary. This is what makes him a bull-dog. When the dirigible began to rise he should have let go, as all the men did, but he did not. Why restrain an impulse that is perfectly good and a fundamental part of your nature? What is an impulse for, if not to use? So he hung on to his heart's content, and he was last seen floating away, a thousand feet in the air, to his pitiful doom.

### *Where is will power reinforced?*

Out in the direction where our desires may be transformed into devotion to some form of creative activity. The finer the creation, the more of our desires are absorbed and united. This is the religious fact which is primary in all human control. It was true long before psychologists discovered it. Jesus laid hold on this fact and gave it immortal expression in his story of the Good Samaritan, at once the simplest and most profound story for little children to hear. Two men going to the temple

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see a wounded man by the side of the road. They are not responsible for his condition; he is no friend or relation of theirs; they would gain nothing from stopping to aid; so they pass by on the other side and proceed to church. But a Samaritan, not supposed to be religious, comes that way. He had no hand in hurting the man by the roadside and would profit nothing by giving him aid. But he feels responsible for a condition that is not as it ought to be and that could be improved. He binds up the stranger's wound, puts him on his own beast, conveys him to the inn, and arranges for his care.

It was Jesus' faith that when any one gave himself over to this unselfish responsibility for something better that ought to be realized, he was aligning himself with the creative spirit of God. The power behind the whole of creation, which we have tried to describe as working for increasing possibilities, can thus be given the use of our life. And when, with self-concern left behind, we surrender to such use, we find in return that our life is being made over in a manner different from a mere act of will.

### *What is conversion?*

Every one knows a little of this mysterious transformation that can be wrought in our nature. We have all lived under "forced draft" when we push and drive ourselves to do what ought to be done. We make

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ourselves behave, restrain desires that clamor for expression, do our duty as though it were against the grain of our inclination. We have also discovered that such strained behavior is only skin deep. Wrong motives and imaginations and covetous passions lie leashed within us, but unconquered. We cannot deliver ourselves from ourselves. Here is where evil habits and subconscious influences fasten themselves on a man and chain him down until his will is helpless to direct his life.

On the other hand, we have all had times when we were delivered from this forced living. Something that needed to be done appealed to us, and we let ourselves go until the service completely carried us out of ourselves. We lived for the time as though we could not help it. And what happened to all the forcing of will, and the restraint of desires, and the battle with hidden evil? The whole struggle was eased. All our desires were transformed and united and given free expression. Everything in us seemed to be going on toward complete satisfaction. It was like being "born again." Here was a righteousness that was very different from that of our own making. Just this transforming of life is what religion means by salvation. To extend these high moments and bring more of life to their level is the process of conversion, which to some is like a sudden turning from a futile life, and to others like a growing absorption in interests that leave self-concern behind. Here

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we need to pass on to an understanding of God's arrangements for transforming desires into devotion.

*But we should be under no fond illusion that the transformation of life ever becomes complete. We need to know, not only how we may be changed, but how to bear the relentless consciousness of so much in us that remains to be changed.*

## CHAPTER X

### TRANSFORMING DESIRE

IT was observed by Buddha, and by many writers of the pessimistic school, that desire is the source of all our woe. To some the abolition of desire has seemed the only road to peace. But the faith of Christ is founded on the idea that desires are not to be abolished but transformed. Our impulses are susceptible of being so redirected and made over that what was once a source of evil may be a source of good. But we cannot transform ourselves; we are dependent on influences that do the transforming. It takes all the will power we possess to keep our lives surrendered to influences that make for this change.

#### I. THE PLACE OF FEAR.

*How can fear help in the control of human nature?*

If God has any system for inducing a life of devotion, we should meet that system in ordinary, everyday affairs. And the first sign of it is in the tendency of a careless, undevoted life to disintegrate,—literally to go to pieces. Painful consequences warn us against using our energy as we please. This threat can never produce good character, but it can make us cautious.

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It can at least check us, make us think, and set us looking in the direction of better satisfaction. That is all it is supposed to do.

Men say we need no longer fear the wrath of God; but what, then, have we to fear? A scientific study of human nature has shown us in no uncertain terms what we have to fear. Some power not ourselves has arranged life so that when we fail to find the right outlet for our energy, or have it blocked in any way, there are only three other outlets available. Either our energy turns inward and creates the nervous disorders of the neurotic; or toward the vicious and makes the criminal; or toward the selfish and exaggerates all the lower desires. Furthermore, if we fail to satisfy life on its higher ranges, the lower ranges of desire become abnormally developed. They are overworked in the vain attempt to satisfy us.

Evidence of this exaggeration of low-level desires is all around us. The morbid passion for more money to buy more pleasure has heightened the pace of life until the hospitals are full of nervous wrecks. Look at the obsession with sex, which has made the life of the brothel respectable in some polite society. Or, consider how the low tricks of the bucket shop and the racketeer and the bandit and the gambling den gained vogue in the best circles of business and finance until the confidence of the country was destroyed. Or, see



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how the fighting instincts of the cavemen are rampant in our belated nationalisms. It is all evidence that life heads back to dissatisfaction when human energy on the higher levels fails to find the right outlet.

### 2. THE APPEAL TO HONOR

*Is not our moral conduct our own affair?*

Fear of the consequences of our own acts, as we have said, appeals to selfishness and only makes us cautious; it does not make us better. To save us from the "don't care" attitude, there is something in the ordained scheme of life that does more than fear can do. It is the fact that what we do matters to other people who play the game of life with us. Life is not a solitaire game, but team-play. If you row your own boat in a race, it does not matter much to anybody else what you do. You can pull hard, or you can loaf along; you take all the consequences. But in an eight-oared shell it is different. There you either must pull your weight in the boat or the others have to pull you. If you weaken, it means a harder job for those who pull that boat across the line. And life is not like a lake where everybody is paddling his own canoe. God did not arrange it that way. He linked us together so that we could take the consequences of each other's living. That is the way to accomplish most for all, and it is the best way to shame a shirker. When we suffer for what we do, it makes us

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cautious; when others suffer for our failure, it reveals our cowardice and rouses our sense of honor.

A certain boy was wont to amuse himself by throwing green apples at the beehives near his cousin's house. He liked to hear the buzzing and see the swarms come pouring out for business. Warnings that he might be stung were of no avail. Once he was bitten by an angry bee. That only caused him to keep a safer distance when he threw his apples. One day, however, when he stormed the hives, the bees pursued him, but instead of stinging him they fell upon his cousin. That made a difference. When he saw his cousin take the consequence of his thoughtless fun, it made him no longer cautious but ashamed. He never threw the apples any more.

We are aroused from the "don't care" attitude in the world of industry by the people who have suffered from the commercial selfishness that uses men as means to profit. That suffering, under God, is never wasted. It may be unjust and make men doubt a good God, and stir them to revolt; but innocent suffering is ever used to change the conscience of a selfish world. The victims of child labor, miners and millworkers battling for justice, the unemployed,—these have been taking the consequences of our deeds, and through them we are being made to think toward a fairer world for all. In the last war, millions of men and women took the fearful consequence of an attempt to run the world as though

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every nation were here to live for itself. Through them we have been made to care for some better way to settle our disputes and live together. By some vast plan of God, moving on in spite of us, our interdependence is growing year by year. This inevitable necessity of taking the consequences of each other's living is driving us to acknowledge that we are all in the same boat and not in separate canoes.

### 3. THE TRANSFORMING POWER

*What influence is needed to transform desires?*

We can only understand this influence when we meet it in life where it can be felt alive and distinguished from counterfeits. Only living illustrations can reveal it in various forms.

A party of boisterous youth was being taken on a sight-seeing tour. Toward the end of the day, when they were pretty well fed with sights, they came to a monument standing near a rocky stretch of seashore. In their silly mood, they sauntered up to the monument, saying, "Well, who is this up on this pedestal?" The leader began to explain that some years before, a coasting vessel had been wrecked near there in a storm. The life-boats were all smashed. Though there was little hope of any one swimming through that sea, there was nothing else to do. Unfortunately there were not enough life-belts to go around. No one finally survived, but the only

## TRANSFORMING DESIRE

bodies that were washed ashore were passengers who had the life belts on. This monument was in memory of the officers and crew who were never found. After that explanation one boy after another instinctively took off his hat and stood there in silence, surrendered in admiration. They met there an influence which so commanded them by its worth, without argument, that it deepened their sense of unworthiness and invited surrender. That is the only influence that ever can transform desire. Neither science nor philosophy can furnish this influence; it is often hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent,—especially the prudent.

Whenever you meet, in your mother or a friend, the sort of care which will follow you down to the gates of hell and make your life its own and never let go, you have come up against the only power that commands you without persuasion, reaches your sense of unworthiness, and makes you wish to offer up the best that is in you.

Here is one other illustration of this influence as a forgiving power. A boy, subnormal intellectually, was stranded in the third grade of a public school because he could not learn as other children. He stayed there until he was so overgrown that he had to be promoted to the next grade. There he continued to fail until, on account of his size, he was promoted once more. And again he was a failure. He knew it. Teachers had told him so.

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His fellow students made him feel his backwardness. He hated the school, the teachers, his classmates. Then he became a truant. He was caught and sent back to school, where he loathed everything which suggested that he was a failure. He ran away again, was caught and sent to the reformatory as an incorrigible truant. There he went to another kind of school and was put in a room where, instead of books, there were all sorts of interesting enterprises, such as carpentering, clay modelling, printing, and mechanical work. He was let loose to try anything. After sampling one thing and another, he was seen going back several times to the clay modelling. Finally the teacher, picking up a crude piece of the boy's work, said: "John, I did not know you could do that sort of thing; try another." The encouragement went on, with the least sign of any ability. For the first time this boy had met somebody who cared enough to believe in him as more than a failure.

Here was kindness that overlooked his errors, appealed to what was good in him, shared the burden of his problem, showed an interest that would feel pained by his failure, judged him not for what he was but for what he might be. And under the influence of that kind of love the boy became a different being.

No punishment behind bars can work that miracle. There is only one power that changes life like that. It is the very power that Jesus revealed in his own life, not

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as something unknown from outside, but as right here, working through human life and conquering by its very suffering.

### 4. PAYING THE PRICE

*Why should love have to suffer to win the world toward the best?*

The love that gives itself to need or suffers under the burden of another's wrong is the price that is paid to make people want a better life than they have known in the past. This gospel must be told in action and not in mere words, so that we feel an influence which so commands us by its worth, without argument, that it deepens our sense of unworthiness and induces surrender. Most certainly, as far as our human race is concerned, this is the most determining power in the universe. This may fail at times, but when it does there is no other hope. Human personalities are the only channels through which such love can be brought alive to those who need it. And when the lovelessness of men is all that confronts an offender trying to escape from a bad past, he finds it hard to believe that forgiveness is a power in the universe.

Real forgiveness is very different from saying to a person, easily and off-hand, "Forget your past; let by-gones be by-gones." That is easy to say, but it is too easy. To let men off like that would only demoralize their character. It would not change them and be a sub-

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stitute for punishment, because it would not even make them cautious. No one can safely be forgiven until something is done to make him *more ashamed than if he were punished*. That might be a substitute for punishment because it would be more effective in setting things right. And our human nature is so constituted that love, which shares our disgrace, suffers for our wrong, and pays the price of our selfishness, is the only influence that goes deep enough under our skin to make us really care. Not all the omnipotence in the universe could accomplish this result without love. It always *costs* to make people care.

### *Where does the supply of love come from?*

We have touched on this point before, but here let it be said again that this is a *furnished power* in the universe, just as truly as gravity is provided and not created by us. A stream of kindly, long-suffering, tireless influence, from an inexhaustible source pervades our realm of human nature; moving in us and yet more than we are; starting long before we ever appeared and going on when our work is done. As a great philosopher has said, it is as though the moving spirit of the world were an aggressive lover, disposed to break in upon our critical temper and win response. We are having the experience of God on its most effective level when we are overtaken by this commanding influence that defies our arguments, reaches

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down past all self-concern to our sense of unworthiness and wins us to a surrender at that point.

Christ, by his life and death, brought this divine love to the world and, once for all, made it alive in such convincing form that a new flood of transforming power spread through the human race out to the ends of the earth. Our whole civilization for twenty centuries has been so saturated by the influence of his life and cross, that we can no more be isolated from him than we can detach ourselves from the effects of the scientific movement, which has spread everywhere from its humble beginning through the mind of Bacon. Churches may come and go, religion may betray its own cause over and over again, but to the end of time, when we face the problem of transforming human desires we will depend on the very power revealed there in the peasant of Galilee. As Paul pointed out, this love may look like weakness in a practical world of the iron fist, but those who have once come under its sway and surrendered life to its use should be prepared to name it "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

### 5. THE EFFECT OF TRANSFORMED DESIRE

*How can any change in our desires undo the results of our past life?*

Here again is where something besides will power must enter in. We are powerless to take back what we



have lived. That predicament might be illustrated by the plight of a small child, who, having evaded the eye of her mother, had obtained possession of a soft tube of paste and was watching the contents emerge as she squeezed the tube. When the ominous silence attracted the mother to the spot, she found a contrite little individual trying in vain to make the paste go back into its container. Nothing is so tragic as the way our words and deeds and influence, once sent forth into the world, become irrecoverable. They enter into other lives, set trains of action going beyond our power to follow, become part of the vast network of custom and practice which is lifting or lowering the standards of living, and extend their effects into the whole interrelated system of life through which God's creative work is being done. We cannot by ourselves wipe out our guilt. The problem of forgiving a bad past is, in part, this handling of consequences which are beyond our control.

*What can forgiveness do for the guilt of an irrecoverable past?*

If there were no provision in this universe for changing or overcoming the working out of past actions, what a hell all existence would be!

We have been taught that Christ came to represent God in this matter and make plain to us the manner of forgiveness that would save us from the endless conse-

quences of what we had done. In various ages men have used figures of speech, taken from their current thought, to describe the part that Christ has played. Christ's own action is simpler to understand. He went, you remember, to the house of a stingy little tax gatherer who had been grafting profits from the poor. He took the risk of sharing the man's disgrace to show an interest in him; and when he left the house he said that salvation had come there. The public grafter had been made to care so much about being fair and generous that he offered half of his goods to the poor and promised to restore fourfold anything he had wrongfully taken.

*How do we escape fear of our past?*

Before a man cares to give himself as an instrument for the best, his past is a bad secret, something to be feared and hidden as nothing but a hindrance. After he has surrendered himself to be used for good his past becomes an implement which need not be hidden. It may be brought up as an argument in persuading others toward what is better. It can be a stimulant to humility and recovery and renewed devotion. *This change of one's past from a hindrance to a use is what the forgiveness of God means in fact.* Through lives so changed influences go forth and are taken up in God's interrelated system of life to counteract and turn to good purposes, so far as it is possible, the evil consequences which we are

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helpless to manage by ourselves. Were it not for this provision, made evident to us in Christ's way of treating people, our life would be driven to despair. The unforgiving spirit in men often hides all this from those who need it most.

### 6. THE FINAL DECISION

*Can any one be morally neutral?*

Every man comes to the crucial decision of his life when he sees he must belong to one of two groups of people.

(A) One group is made up of those who add their bit to the selfishness which makes the situations that must be suffered for. There recently appeared an enlightening article giving the official report on the sinking of the *Titanic*. The captain of that vessel, on her maiden voyage, was ambitious to break a record. He was competing for a little useless fame for himself and his company. Five separate warnings by radio told him of icebergs ahead, but he sped on for his record, twenty-two knots in a fog, to the fatal crash. Twelve miles away, at the time, the steamship *California* was also in an ice field. But five minutes before the call for help went out from the *Titanic* the radio operator on the *California*, feeling a little sleepy, took off his ear phones, deserted his post on a night when ice warnings were out, and

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went to bed. He never heard the message that could have brought his ship in time to save all the lives aboard the sinking liner.

Lives like that, competing for a little selfish fame or just indulging in their own comfort, are numerous enough in the world. Everywhere, people mainly interested in looking after themselves! They feel innocent; they mean no harm. But in our interrelated world that self-centred indifference is responsible for making situations that have to be suffered for. Somewhere the price of selfishness has to be paid. If we refuse to see and go on in our narrow way, the price keeps piling up until in some heartbreak or tragedy it must be faced.

(B) The other group is made up of those who suffer to make the indifferent care. No one ever understands what life really means until he takes upon himself some of this business of making people care for what they ought to want. That is where all progress is delayed,—just where it is hard to make people care. Start to live ahead of the crowd anywhere and promote a good cause, and you see that everything turns on this issue of making people care. Try to help another to escape from his destructive desires, and you find his life is your burden. If you wish to be a pioneer in any calling, you will have to take upon yourself the shame of those people who disgrace your profession and give it an evil name. But this is the only way the world can be made better.

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In the past some one has pulled the boat up to the point where we have come aboard, and now our turn has come. A recent novelist makes one of her characters say that some people make the world and the rest just come along to live in it. Evidently the creative power of God that moves the world along is most aggressive through those unsparing spirits who have pulled at the oars and suffered for the selfishness of others who only sit in the boat and ride. Such sufferers may have a hard place to fill, and injustice may be their lot. However, more through them than through others God works to make the world care in the end. That power that operates through suffering is the one sovereign, tireless, undefeatable power we know. The cross of Christ gave this courageous faith to the world. In that life crucified we learned where to unite with the wisdom of God and the power of God, whereby in the long run men are made to care for something greater than themselves.

Here, then, is the decisive choice of every man. Either we are helping to bear with God the burden of man's ignorance and inertia and selfishness, or our self-absorbed life becomes the load that others with God must bear. "Something has to be done with everything we do." In God's creative scheme "we are either benefactors or malefactors." There is no middle ground, and neither respectability nor financial success can be an alibi.

## 7. THE SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS

*Can we ever be rid of the sense of unworthiness?*

No. The sense of more that we ought to be, as we have pointed out before, is the very heart of our relation with an infinite God. That feeling of never being through is inseparable from our life in a universe where our imperfect attainments are forever subject to judgment. The most important contribution of religion lies in this final and absolute claim, which continually brings to light the shortcomings in all our human standards and arrangements.

Wherever we meet with the transforming power of love, this sense of unworthiness is deepened rather than relieved. Some one has well said that "Jesus, by setting the standard of love beyond the hitherto accepted boundaries, altered the map of obligation for mankind." Because he lived, a range of life has been opened to our vision which forever puts to shame our imperfection and reveals the inherent evil in all the ordinary practices of life, so commonly taken for granted. Let any one, with his spirit, really challenge the life around him, and he will find today, as Jesus found in Jerusalem, where selfishness, cloaked with respectability, is waiting to crucify. The sins of the world are emphasized and revealed by the kind of love with which Jesus brought us in touch.

*Is there any cure for moral discouragement?*

The world has attempted many cures. Some individuals strain to appear more worthy, and end in self-righteousness and inner disgust. If we take refuge in Utopian dreams of perfection by and by, we are in for a series of sad disillusionments. Many idealists today, struggling for a more just order of life, overlook the fact that, having attained it, they will require more just individuals to manage the system they set up. No outward shift of scene will abolish the fact that human nature will over and over prove inadequate, and human selfishness will upset the working of any plan. Under any conditions we shall have moral discouragements, which tend to drive the spirit of man into bitterness.

This perpetual judgment upon our imperfections takes on a new aspect to any one who accepts Christ's revelation that in this judgment we are beset by an infinite *love*. We know that where love makes us see our imperfection it also makes us feel, the moment we surrender to its claim, that we are understood and accepted,—not for what we are but for what we are trying to be. It relieves the discouraging strain, but instead of letting us down it stimulates our effort and gives us courage and zest to go on. This was what Francis Thompson put into poetic form in his *Hound of Heaven*,

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describing our life as pursued by some relentless judgment, as by a hound upon our trail.

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He Whom thou seekest!  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

To accept the eternal struggle between the imperfect and the perfect in this light which Jesus throws upon it, is what gives men confidence even in failure. Moral discouragement here finds the only cure yet known that does not relax ambition and delude with false hopes.

*Have we, being unworthy, any right to judge the unworthiness of others?*

There is a reported saying of Jesus in which he stated his position on this matter: "I came, not to judge the world, but to save the world." And he also said some rather strict things about our easy habit of passing judgment on others. A new kind of conscience on this point has been spread through the earth since Jesus' day, far outside the church which bears his name. It is different from mere tolerant goodwill and kindly feeling toward one's fellow men, important as these are. *A conscience that has been captured by love makes one feel that he is involved in the sins of the world as though they were his own.* In our interrelated world that is the only true attitude we can take. Jesus may not have contributed



## THE SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS

to the sins of his day, yet, with a troubled conscience he felt himself part of a system that was wrong. We, on the contrary, have helped to produce the sins and the sinners of our generation. By the kind of life we have condoned, or profited by, or imitated, we have helped to make all that is wrong in society. Ever since the War we have been suffering from the folly of judging one nation as though it alone were responsible for the War. All of us who had been taking part in the life of the world as it was before 1914 were mutually to blame. So in all our social life, we cannot rightly judge others as though we were entirely innocent and superior when we are all implicated in the circumstances which are perverting the lives of men. This sense of bearing guilt in common can alone soften the antagonisms which so block the way to proper solutions of our problems.

## CHAPTER XI

### ADVERSITY

WHATEVER divine activity is making for increasing possibilities in every line of development, it certainly meets a contradiction of tremendous force. Our effort toward the ideal seems to have little support from the natural forces around us. Tragedy comes alike to all, with no respect for age or innocence or personal worth. It looks as though chance played a disastrous part at times. The bigotry and perversity of human nature is so blindly obstinate that love must pay a terrific price to find entrance into the scheme of life. And, most baffling of all, is the impersonal pressure of organized society upon the individual. Those who live near the edge of poverty feel a heartless force from the class above them, using them as mere cogs in a machine. Competition with conscienceless groups drives honest men upon the rocks of disaster, like ships helpless in a tide. Our whole economic order involves us in war, the cruelty of unemployment, and every sort of moral perversion, while the individual finds himself powerless to produce a change.

No faith or philosophy of life that would smooth over this tragic contradiction, with the mystery of death over-

hanging all, can be honest or effective. Some one has well said, "There are many problems of human living that are not susceptible of a final solution"; this is one of them. But in this chapter we shall consider a practical working attitude toward this age-old source of doubt and despair.

## I. THE EVADING ATTITUDE

### *Can we evade the mystery of evil?*

The way we feel about this question will largely depend upon one's level of prosperity.

Dispossessed people, who suffer most from the relentless injustice of society, and are struggling for the sheer means of existence, are not the ones to philosophize about the mystery of evil. Their one interest is to know what to do about the evil at hand. Probably this is the healthiest attitude to take, and, as we shall see, its impulse to know how evil occurs and how to make something better out of it brings men nearer to Christ's point of view than any other approach to the problem.

On the other hand, the overprivileged people are apt to take an easy-going existence for granted, without doing any thinking until something untoward happens. They feel little concern over oppression and injustice in the world so long as it is far away and keeps out of their own immediate dooryard. As for their own possible troubles, they prefer to cross no bridges until they

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reach them. Particularly common, among the intellectuals, is the habit of turning one's back on the dark mystery of nature. Some are inclined to let go the whole idea of a God who cares. Others would have a limited God, confined to the good spirit in humanity, with no responsibility for the universe outside. The point is that this religion of humanity wants to leave the mystery of the universe alone. Since we cannot understand the mystery nor see its relation to God, so it is argued, let us honestly say we know nothing about it and go about our human business to do the best we can for humanity.

### *What is wrong with this evading attitude?*

The difficulty is that people have never been able for long to maintain this position of ignoring the mystery of the universe. Our scientists cannot rest for their desire to know more about it.

A great philosopher has said: "If there is anything which destiny may thrust upon us from which we must hide our mind, we are not happy." So long as we try to forget misery, suffering, and death, we feel "there is a skeleton in the closet of the universe and we may at any moment be in face of it." The jauntiness of youth may say, "I don't know and I don't care"; but you cannot carry that jaunty air when some rough experience shakes the very foundations of life. There come times when every one of us wants to know how Browning could

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write, "see all nor be afraid," or how the ancient voice of Job could cry, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him," or how Jesus on his cross could say in almost one breath, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." If there is a point of view which enables a man to have faith like this, he ought to know about it, and the sooner the better.

*Will we ever be able to solve this problem of evil?*

We do not need to solve the mystery of life before we acquire a faith to live by. The best that men have ever been able to do is to have *faith enough to carry their doubts*. That was enough for Jesus in living a life like his, faith enough to commit himself to God's activity, when it seemed as though everything was against him.

We too often suppose this mystery of life is a purely intellectual question. Not at all. It is a practical question that meets us like this: "Will you believe the best after you face the worst about life?" This does not mean that you should believe the best by overlooking the worst. That is hopeless. But after you face the worst, can you believe the best about life? Whenever we act at all we have to commit ourselves to one side or another of this issue. We not only make up our mind, we literally bet our whole life on the best or the worst. Everybody must do so.

Look at the engineers who built the Panama Canal

through fever-ridden swamps. The French had abandoned the enterprise as hopeless and left dredges rusting in the jungle. They fled from the deadly plague of yellow fever. Before that enterprise was renewed, a choice had to be made between the best and the worst in that situation. After facing the worst, our engineers staked their brains and their lives and the lives of others and all the resources of a nation on the best. It was necessary to take sides.

So it is, from the big issues of the world down to the small events of private life. Facing the worst, will you believe the best about life, or will you believe that the worst is the last word?

## 2. THE EXPLAINING ATTITUDE

*Is an explanation of evil ever adequate?*

Explanations will always be inadequate because we do not know enough to understand the whole universe. When it comes to real living we find that while we learn something by explanation, we learn something more by participation. The explaining attitude is hopeless if we separate it from the participating attitude.

We are obsessed with the credulous notion that we can understand life by explaining everything. One cannot talk intimately with people these days without noticing the predominance of this explaining attitude. It would seem that we had all taken the oath to seek explanations,

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the whole explanation and nothing but explanation, as though man could live by explanations alone.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the explaining attitude. For centuries our race has suffered from the lack of it. The scientific age has engendered in the world a relentless impatience with the unexplained. Think what Pasteur's explanation of the germ theory of disease has meant to man and beast. The more explanations, the better! More life lies that way.

If we are to keep sane in all this, we must never disconnect this explaining attitude from the participating attitude toward life. Explaining life is one thing; living it is another. And we learn something by participating that we cannot learn by explaining.

The point is that the participating attitude discovers what might be. Explanations help us understand the elements, the raw material out of which more might be made. Participating in the business of living helps us find what can be done with the material at hand. It creates something new out of what is present, discovers possibilities that lie hidden, and brings out the meaning that otherwise would never be known.

### 3. WEAKNESS OF EXPLANATIONS

*Why do we seek relief in explanation?*

That seems to be the first way out that occurs to our minds. When Jesus came to his darkest and most per-

plexing hour, the natural cry of despair escaped him: "My God, why . . .?" So it is with everybody when they make contact with stern reality; they try to come to terms with it by taking the explaining attitude. This attitude sees the mystery as a problem which raises the question, "Why?" It is the spectator's attitude. It is a passive taking of observations, in the attempt to obtain an intellectual explanation of the situation as it is. This attitude, alone, has always produced unsatisfactory results.

*If the world is evil, how explain the good?*

It seems easy to explain *away* the conflict of good and evil by *reducing the significance of the good*. That has been popular in current literature. Take as a sample the philosophy of life which a modern novelist has recently given to the public. He faces this mystery of life and with reverence or rage or irony demands of cosmic energy to know why. He tries to analyze existence with the knowledge of science, and finds that life reduces down to molecules, cells, and atoms, and these finally reduce to electricity. But then, he says, "What is electricity? Atoms. And what are atoms? Electricity. Wonderful!" Thus observing the world from his room in a New York apartment, he concludes: "I catch no meaning from all I have seen and pass quite as I came, confused and dismayed."

He reduced life to an explanation which meant noth-



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ing. And many there are in that same attitude. People with such views either become parasites and live cynically in a world that other people sustain for them; or they live contrary to their philosophy and try to be decent in spite of it.

### *Is evil good in the long run?*

The explaining attitude may tempt us to explain away the conflict of good and evil by *reducing the significance of the evil*. This is a whitewashing process which makes out evil to be less serious than it really is. Such procedure takes various forms.

Some would say that evil is a *good thing for soul-making*, something to discipline and exercise our spirits. Thus it contributes to the good of the whole. There is some truth here, but it is not an explanation of evil. There is too much evil for this soul-making business. Think of the evil that frustrates lives by the millions, who deserve no such frustration.

Another whitewashing explanation is that evil is just illusion, *an error of the human mind*. There is some truth here. Much of our trouble does come from wrong thought. Wrong mental attitudes affect health and hinder healing. Right mental attitudes have much to do with gaining and keeping health. And many of our social problems run back to wrong thought. We will do right only when we begin to think right. But this

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truth about the power of thought is not an explanation of evil. If evil is just a mental error, then the mind is evil instead of the world. There is still the question, "Why did God give us minds that think the world is full of evil, when evil is not there?" But the worst of this philosophy is its paralyzing effect. As a recent writer has said, "If evil is only an illusion, then why bother about it?" There is nothing real there. Don't bother to stave off epidemics, don't bother to fight racketeers, don't bother to change social injustice or make scientific discoveries for the cure of disease. Evil is nothing; so don't bother. Either man lives contrary to this philosophy and does his share in the world, or he becomes a parasite on those who fight the wrong that threatens to undo us.

This whole explaining attitude is helpless because it is too passive. To sit still and ask why evil is here is like sitting still and asking why the ocean is here, or why anything is here. We have no final answer to this "why," because we can never know the beginning nor see the end of this creative process.

### 4. THE PARTICIPATING ATTITUDE

*What can take the place of explanations?*

We may make the discovery that whatever evil may be, it need not have the final word about life. Here we face the mystery not as a problem that raises the question

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"Why?" but as a challenge that brings the question "How?"—*how* has this situation come about; *how* can it be handled to make something better come out of it? This is the attitude that discovers more and more of what the situation really means. Explanations will still be of use to furnish some knowledge to work with. But all our progress lies with this participating attitude, for the increasing understanding of life lies in this direction and no other.

Certainly this is the way individuals have lived who have made us aware of life's possibilities for good. When some tragedy or defeat or disappointment befalls a man, so that nothing can be done about it, the worst thing he can do is to pity himself and ask why he has been picked out for such trouble. His one salvation is to escape from himself and participate in life where something more can still be done. God cannot help him unless he takes this attitude. Helen Keller, shut into darkness and silence, goes out of herself and participates in the life of all blind people and in every fine interest where blindness cannot hinder her advance. Bunyan, shut in prison, went out of himself, and let his mind participate in the creation of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. To people with such an attitude, new avenues of life and influence are opened up quite beyond the individual's power to foresee. This is the way we discover that evil, whatever it is, need not have the final word about life.

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Likewise this is the way our human race has been lifted up and out toward new levels of living. Men have realized that we are in an incomplete world, and when our ignorance or selfishness has brought us trouble, they have said, "How has this trouble come about; how can we learn from this something more we need to know or do?" Participating with others, who are involved as they are, it has been revealed to them what more there was to learn. That is the way we have grown in wisdom and efficiency.

We know that the forces of nature, if we do not get out of the way, run over us, crush us, shock us, freeze us. Their relentless and fixed operation has seemed like cruelty and indifference. But instead of asking "Why?" the scientist has said, "How can we learn what these fixed laws are and fall in with them?" That way we find increasingly that nature may be more our servant and less our master.

We know that much evil comes of our being so related to other people that we take the consequences of each other's living. Instead of asking "Why?" we have sought to know how tragedies arise.

*How does trust in God help with this mystery of life?*

By living in life, in the thick of it, we gain our real knowledge of how God works His will among us. From

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what is being done with our human race we can see that God is not some arbitrary omnipotence who acts irresponsibly from moment to moment. We could never know what such power might do. We would turn fatalist and take whatever happens as God's will. What life reveals is *some power greater than ourselves and limited to one clear purpose—never to be reconciled to evil and incompleteness*. An undefeatable and tireless urge to something better beyond the present is operating through this life of ours. Such a divine activity is dealing with resistance, we know not why. God meets the resistance of intractable material, the resistance of people who must be won, not forced; but, like an expert at the chess board, knowing well his game, He seems equal to all emergencies in the long run. Out of all the conflict with incompleteness, He somehow leads us to understand more truth and beauty. Out of conflict in society, when we take the consequences of each other's living, He brings us where we find better ways to live together and to supplement each other. Through all this wrestling with the finite and the physical, there is brought forth a higher life of the spirit, with infinite value and an eternal quality.

Down through the centuries this participating attitude, which Christ made the centre of his faith, has furnished men *a way of accepting life without being resigned to it*. Without giving an explanation of everything, it has

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given insights which enable us to hold up our heads in the universe with confidence and courage.

This approach to life might be illustrated by the contrast between two farmers in a certain stony region where the land was quite unfit for real farming. One man accepted the situation and was resigned to it. He took it as the end of any hopeful effort, lived in a mere hovel, with a few chickens and a cow, sustaining himself by doing odd jobs for the neighbors. The other man accepted the same situation, without being resigned to it. He took it not as the end, but as the beginning of effort, developed a chicken farm for which the land was quite suitable, and prospered so that he sent his children to college and built for his family a life of broadening interests. This suggests the kind of life which, in the face of adversity, can meet situations with a faith that can carry its doubts.

We never see the end,—just situations met where some good is made out of evil. The demonstration of victory over incompleteness is still going on. We are part of it. Only as we participate can we get the proof of what might be. A profound thinker has remarked that it is this kind of faith which has made the people who can say: "Let me know the worst. I am not afraid. Nothing is so bad that it cannot in time be transformed into some use. Nothing can make me abandon my post."

## SOURCES OF GOOD AND EVIL

### 5. SOURCES OF GOOD AND EVIL

*What shall we think of God's relation to the sources of evil?*

The participating attitude gives fresh insight when explanations never fully satisfy. Whenever we are inclined to put the above question, we should recall a great sentence of Phillips Brooks, "All the sources of evil may be the sources of good." Choose any source of evil and imagine it removed from the scheme of things, as a surgeon might remove a bothersome appendix. The result would not be like losing a useless organ from one's body. Taking away the source of evil would also eliminate an indispensable source of good. Even God could not avoid that alternative.

For instance, there is pain. Rightly we strive to reduce the needless pain in human life, and always by seeking the source of the pain to change the situation that is causing it. But some pain in itself need not be evil. It is the great alarm bell of the human race, warning us that something is wrong. It is the only bell that really awakens us. Without it we would be deep in trouble before we knew what had happened.

Or again, there are our troublesome instincts. In a self-indulgent person the instincts of our nature may seem like the very instruments of the devil; but in a rightly ordered life every one of these instincts has some good

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and essential part to play. Not one of them could be omitted without interfering with the best possibilities.

*How should one understand the heartlessness of nature?*

Nature rolls on her way of law as if we were not here, and that absolute ignoring of our human wishes is what makes nature reliable. Suppose nature proceeded in the way each of us desired; no one could tell what would happen next. We have mastered the resources of nature only because we could study the laws from which she never swerves for any one. God has sought to meet this problem, not by changing nature but by training us through pain and hard thinking and experiment to discover that this source of trouble may become one source of our greatest good. This takes time, but better this than a natural system that no one could trust from one moment to the next.

Inevitably, as we have seen, much of the order of nature must be characterless, neither good nor bad. Yet in the human part of nature we find revealed a helpful kind of activity which is ever demonstrating that the resources of nature, characterless as they may be, can be the instruments in a plan for increasing the possibilities of life. Using these resources for exploitation and selfish strife, we have found them so destructive as to threaten the very existence of civilization. But when they are



## SOURCES OF GOOD AND EVIL

used with that spirit of responsibility for the common good (which Christ claimed was the mark of our union with the creative spirit of God), they become the means of harmony, unity, and more abundant life. It is permissible to think that there is some fundamental connection between the spirit revealed in Christ, and that same spirit moving in humanity everywhere, and the power responsible for the whole creative process. This was evidently the faith of Christ, and, strange as it may seem, the truth which has been embodied in the doctrine of the Trinity.

### *Is freedom an evil?*

The feeling of humanity rings out in the words, "O Liberty, what crimes have been committed in thy name!" And yet Patrick Henry's words still speak the deepest conviction of men, "Give me liberty or give me death." The kind of goodness which is the crowning glory of our race is due to freedom. Not even God can make good people by compulsion and divine decree. The winning of free men to the highest is the only way to make the virtue we admire. Better all the tragedies of freedom than lose this chance of virtue. It may seem hard, but through trial and error and suffering *our race is being trained to control freedom*, clear down to the cruder forms on sub-human levels.

## 6. LIMITATIONS OF GOD

*Is God limited in His Powers?*

As we have said above, the divine activity around us seems to be "limited to the purpose of never being reconciled to evil and incompleteness." Now we would add the further truth, which emerges as we participate in the business of life, that *God is not through*. The demonstration of God's power to get His goodwill done in the universe is not yet complete.

No; the demonstration is only begun. People have talked about the omnipotence of God as though that meant power to do anything at once. We need to throw overboard this childish notion of omnipotence. Shakespeare had the power to write the world's greatest dramas, but it took time to exhibit that power. Lord Shaftesbury had power to reform some of the worst evils in English society, but it took thirty years to demonstrate it. What could be done at once in any given moment was no proof of the power of these men. And the big things that God is concerned with take time. It is nothing against His power that He cannot do everything at once. The accomplishment of His goodwill is a long process, not a finished event, and you and I need to suspend our judgments and keep our minds open concerning any event that occurs in a program that is not

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yet complete. So long as there is a future, everything may have a new and larger meaning.

Here is a man amusing himself by putting together a jig-saw puzzle. The table is covered with a meaningless jumble of tiny pieces of wood, of different shapes and colors. Along two edges of the table the pattern is taking form. It appears to be sky. A little later it may seem to be a sheet of water with a boat upon it. Still later it may turn out to be some landscape wall-paper in a country house. You see how impossible it is to judge the significance of any single piece of the puzzle until more of the pattern has been worked out, and that requires time. In that sort of puzzle you build up an area which you somewhat understand, and which helps you to be expectant of meaning in the pieces that are yet in meaningless disorder. At any moment some little piece fitted in may enable you to bring a new section of the chaos into the pattern that you comprehend.

So with the universe. While the goodwill of God is continuing its work, certain areas of life will already be in accord with it; but there are bound to be many separate incidents and large sections of existence which apparently are not yet connected with the good plan. All sorts of miseries may arise from these areas where the main purpose is still undeveloped. God may no more will them to occur than we do, but they are incidental to a long process that takes time to complete. You and

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I should sustain our faith by the portion of life where goodness has accomplished some of the plan. There is no point in throwing that aside because the rest is obscure. So only may we face our doubts about the remaining mystery, confident that if some of it has been brought into rational order, more and more of it may be in time.

*Is there comfort in the idea that God is not through?*

So long as there is a future, the last word can never be with evil. Since God is not through, something new may be made out of every situation in the ongoing of creation. This is why sheer persistence and refusal to surrender in a difficulty is so often the key that opens the door to the unexpected. When a man keeps going, God has His chance to accomplish the unforeseen.

### 7. THE FINAL TRUST

*Has goodness the upper hand in the universe?*

We have reason to believe that it has, in the long run. The more evil succeeds, the more it fails; multiplying its own enemies, increasing its own obstacles and disintegrating the very life on which it depends. Under God, life has been so arranged that evil is given a self-defeating twist after due time, turning men to think

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that they are not right with reality. Goodness, on the other hand, makes its way by either success or defeat. Defeated goodness, crucified goodness, is the greatest power we know for putting men to shame and arousing them to action.

*Can we tell in advance how all things may work for good?*

No. We cannot be sure in advance because the best in all situations is being created all the time, and we have to be used in the process. If we refuse to give ourselves to the chance of the best in life, after we have faced the worst, then so far as we are concerned the best remains hidden and the worst may happen.

How true that is in relation to people! We have to side with either the worst or the best in them. If we believe the worst, then we cannot be used to help in discovering the best. The skeptics and the cynics and the scoffers, who see no meaning in life, have been able to live on because they are always dwelling where so many other people believe the best about life in a world where God is not through. These believers are the people who discover the world that is worth living in, and find the good which is in people and in life.

Curiously enough, they have proved that where the best looks like a forlorn hope, it is still the surest

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thing to stake your life upon. Everything that has proved of worth to man began as a forlorn hope. Where anything is not as it ought to be, where any way of life is based on selfishness, no matter how entrenched,—that state is not final. Whatever is injurious to personality in this unjust world is not final. We must never make a final judgment about a bad situation because we do not see the end of it. Those who have followed Christ in this attitude have found themselves used and companioned, as it were, by the spirit working through this living universe toward some better end than what we see.

### *Does faith incline people to shirk responsibility?*

Through Christ one learns no easy and simple trust in the victory of love. As centuries throw new light upon his life and teaching, we realize that the love of God is like the passionate earnestness working through the devotion of scientific people to make the given forces of the universe available for our common life. It is like the incurable concern for more significant life for every individual down to the least. It is like the selfless sympathy which takes hold of some lover of the people and makes him say, "While there is a man in prison, I am not free." It is like the deadly earnestness that is back of economic determinism, allowing nothing to be settled until it is settled rightly. It is like the inclusive, uniting

## THE BATTLE WITH FUTILITY

power which weaves all of us together that all may be used for each and each for all. And however the endless struggle with adversity goes on, *we have evidence that there is enough of this love in God's universe to make a selfish condition forever unsafe and a loveless arrangement finally impossible to maintain.*

As men trust themselves to this faith which is symbolized in the cross of Christ, they put themselves where the divine power that overcomes evil is given a chance to make even the worst work for good. Along this line so much injustice and sorrow and pain have been transformed, so many scaffolds and crosses have become the ruling forces in human destiny, that we can continue to believe, in spite of all defeats, that with our co-operation every wrong condition may yet be changed in the direction of something better. Thus it is that we may hold our faith alongside our doubts as Christ did, and say almost in one breath, "My God, why? . . . Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

### 8. THE BATTLE WITH FUTILITY

*Why is the sense of futility such a disturbing problem to many people?*

This disease of futility infects people unawares; sometimes like a dark mood that clouds over certain bad days; sometimes like a blight that kills the zest of life. It is

today a common disease of youth and of maturity alike.

It was exactly this mood of futility which the early Christians were fighting just after their leader had been hung upon a cross. They felt that what they had been living for had proved futile. Whatever happened on that first Easter morning, its first effect was to deliver the disciples from that feeling of futility. From then on they felt they had something permanent, unconquerable, to live for. Listen to Paul writing to the Corinthians. At the end of his long argument about the resurrection, he said, "Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Living for something that seems futile, and then by participation in life finding something permanent to live for,—that is the greatest thing that can ever happen to any one. According to Christianity, our ideas about living permanently hereafter have no point at all except as an outgrowth of this discovery of something lasting and inexhaustible that enables one to outlive all opposition and defeat right here. To live permanently with temporary and futile interests is a prospect to be dreaded.

*What makes futility so common today?*

We have been preoccupied with temporary and exhaustible interests. You can see this preoccupation in



## THE BATTLE WITH FUTILITY

our practical everyday life. The pressure of living, to get something or to get somewhere and stay there, has kept us on the physical levels of life. A professor from India recently visited this country and left us this parting impression: "I think your young people should face frankly at the start of their career the basic fact that your business system is entirely dedicated to physical problems of making people comfortable, of feeding and clothing them, and of transporting them from place to place. The whole structure is founded on the surprising premise that the physical body is the first concern of society, collectively and individually. Physical welfare within certain limits is, of course, vital. But I believe that the civilized society of tomorrow will use 20 per cent of its time in supplying physical needs instead of 75 per cent to 90 per cent, as you do in the United States." Multitudes have to spend so much time just making a living that they never arrive at the business of making a life. This is what gives many men and women the feeling of futility.

So, too, in our intellectual life we have been pre-occupied with the physical. The physical sciences have been furnishing us with most of our material for thought. We have been stuffing our minds with physical knowledge faster than we could digest it. The result is an epidemic of intellectual nightmares. Take an example from a book called *Man Comes of Age*, by one of our

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scientific writers. He submits that in handling people from now on we are to judge them from the side of their physiology, because we are physiological products.

"It is a very odd thing,  
As odd as can be,  
That whatever Miss T eats  
Turns into Miss T."

There, you see, is the hope of understanding Miss T,—as "a vast factory equipped for innumerable processes of industrial chemistry." Understanding this physical mechanism is understanding the person. There is truth here, of course. But the writer goes on to say that this human machine will not work or grow unless you furnish it something that science can know nothing about. You must stimulate it with make-believe things like ideals, moral obligation, devotion to God. None of these are real, he says, but you have to make them up in order to stimulate this human mechanism before it will work and grow. That is a typical nightmare from intellectual indigestion. We are to believe that infinitesimal electrical particles following least resistance get together and, without any intelligence or purpose, produce this thing we call a human machine, which will run only when you imagine something spiritual to stimulate it. That is like having chance produce a steam engine which runs only when you put imaginary steam in the boiler.

## THE BATTLE WITH FUTILITY

### *Why are physical interests so often futile?*

A physical interest is always a temporary and not a lasting interest. Eating is a temporary interest, does its work, and then fades out. When you come from talking with a really interesting person, what a sad contrast it is to converse with some one with a small mind, who tries to bid for attention on the physical level of shady conversation and borderline conduct. Those who play this sort of trump card all along and depend on it to win, fail in the end; and young people are quite canny about taking the measure of a person who wears out like that. The physical was never meant as something for us to be absorbed in. It is just a means to help us become something more than physical. These temporary, purely physical interests give us certain help and then stop just where they stopped in the days of the cave man. To be preoccupied with them leads to inevitable futility.

This whole problem of futility straightens itself out when we see lived in front of us the kind of life for which the physical is merely a preparation. People who are kept alive and growing are always living by permanent and inexhaustible interests which lie out beyond the physical.

## 9. ETERNAL LIFE

*Are we losing interest in proving immortality?*

Our ability to prove what happens at death and describe a world beyond, is just where it was millions of years ago. We can neither prove nor disprove, nor picture a life after death. And since astronomy has given us such new ideas of the universe we are even less able than our ancestors to imagine a place to go. New knowledge about the relation of our mind and spirit to this physical body has raised again the very ancient difficulty of believing in life apart from the body. And increasing numbers of people find it harder to accept mere statements of religious authority in this great matter.

This faith has persisted not because it has ever been the easy and natural thing to believe. As we have developed from primitive stages, participation in life has given us a new appreciation of this whole matter as quite beyond mere proofs and geographical descriptions. A novelist put it simply when he confessed that, quite apart from his intention and even against his will, he becomes aware of "a life of far, far more importance and beauty than this physical one." Or take these words of a great justice of our courts, who, though religiously skeptical, could still express his deepest convictions thus: "The submergence of self in the pursuit of an ideal, the readiness to spend oneself without measure, prodigally,

almost ecstatically, for something intuitively apprehended as great and noble, spend oneself one knows not why—some of us like to believe that this is what religion means. True, I am sure it is, that values such as these—values of the spirit—will be found to have survived when creeds are shattered and schisms healed and sects forgotten and the things of brass and stone are one with Nineveh and Tyre.”

You see, our generation is little impressed by proofs and pictures of a future place where we could live an endless quantity of life. But amid all the physical and finite things that fail us, we appreciate a kind of life that has a lasting, timeless quality.

When we live for truth, we live for something which has no relation to time at all—it is eternal. When we devote ourselves to the service of beauty and goodness we connect with a realm that has nothing to do with passing years. The evolution of man, as we have pointed out all along, is up from the physical to the life “above the line” where we meet interests that are infinite and inexhaustible and independent of time. By identifying ourselves with that quality of life we enter a timeless world.

All that has been said in this book about our relation to a creative activity, developing higher and higher possibilities in the universe, and using us in the process, helps us to see how our activity may be united with the

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permanent activity of God. Living the kind of life that can be shared, we become part of other lives, and through them part of the whole ongoing work of God's creation.

Just this is what Christianity has stood for. It centres around a man who lived "a life of far, far more importance and beauty than this physical one," and who became a part of the permanent order of life. He could no more be taken out of it now than light could be separated from the sun. As he was so uniquely united with the divine life of intelligent love working toward excellence, he became permanently united with the whole life-making movement of God.

*Is belief in the survival of influence equivalent to belief in personal survival?*

At least, when we can no longer picture a place to go just above the clouds, we should welcome this appreciation of the way our life is taken up in other lives and made part of the life-creating work of God's universe. This idea certainly does not rule out personal survival. In fact, this may be the best way for an individual to survive. We become part of other lives now, without losing our individuality. The larger part of a man's life is that which seems to be going on outside of his own person, quickening other lives, identified with the excellent that is being evolved, and utilized as a factor in creation. All this is not separate from our in-

## ETERNAL LIFE

dividual life while we are living—it is our real life. If we have come to have faith in a divine activity permeating this living universe like a creative spirit, then it may be that our preparation in the chrysalis of the flesh is fitting us to be united with creative life on God's level. Where He is we may be also.

All we are learning of human evolution seems to indicate that we are peculiarly qualified to share more than a physical existence. New ideas of time, which are yet too deep for a layman, are helping us to understand how our mind can rise above mere sequence of years and grasp at once, in one span, some of the past and present and future in a very mysterious manner. Our soul life—that is the form of life which thinks and loves and appreciates the excellent—is proving to be something entirely different from the glands and brain cells and chemical processes of the body through which it operates. Life on that higher level is something quite unique, very much a slave to the body at first, but gradually gaining dominance and turning the body to its use. The thinking power proves to be superior to that which it thinks about.

It would seem that a rational universe would not scrap such important factors of creation as these personalities of ours. If we are not sure how rational the universe is, we certainly should want to trust its rationality here as much as we do in all adventures of science. As we

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live with lives that have found the spiritual beyond the physical, we come to understand how a great philosopher like Professor Palmer of Harvard, on the death of his gifted wife, could say that it would be an irrational world which "out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter would exclude so fair a spirit."

If we have seemed to give small space to this subject of eternal life, it is because this whole book is really devoted to it. Between the lines runs the one thought that we live in the physical to reach the timeless, spiritual level of life, where we may unite with God's creative spirit in the work of imparting life and in devotion to the excellent, which is the permanent. Belief in eternal life comes from appreciation, not from argument.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

THERE are only two final alternatives in life: either our satisfactions must be opening out before us or they must be closing in upon us. We are involved in a living universe where we are not allowed to stand still. This is not always plain from the surface evidence of prosperity and success. Outwardly a life may be expanding in worldly importance, while inwardly its satisfactions are shrinking and closing in. And after all, if the life we live within ourselves is failing to satisfy, no outward success can be a compensation. The art of keeping alive has to do with releasing the better alternative, again and again.

This, of course, is a subject as large as life itself, but in this chapter we will consider the part played by the practice of *taking time out to make up our minds*. There is where we start to release the alternative possibilities of life.

#### I. STOPPING TO THINK

*Why is it that we cannot keep alive by simply keeping busy?*

The answer to this question might be given by an illustration from a football game. Before every play the

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team withdraws from action and goes into a "huddle," where the man who directs the plays makes up his mind to choose some alternative which may decide the issue of the game. Some alternative *has* to be chosen. If the mind is not made up quickly, that is equivalent to asking for a five-yard penalty; and not to make up the mind at all would amount to the same thing as giving up the game.

In the daily round of living it is equally important to withdraw from action, where, in quiet and alone, one can make up his mind. Our basic longing for life is the urge behind this practice. When we are sailing along with everything pulling right, we are apt to take life as it comes with little thought. But when we have made a decision that leads to futility and stalls our advance, and generally diminishes our sense of being alive, then this old longing for life grows clamorous and drives us to see if some other possibilities might be available. This it is that compels the rhythmical movement between time in action and time out to make up our minds again. In the long run our effectiveness in keeping alive depends, not on keeping busy, but first of all on these still times when we stop to think and let everything else go.

*What goes on when we stop to think?*

Curiously enough, there is a formula for these still times, developed by centuries of experience. We fall into

## STOPPING TO THINK

this formula of procedure instinctively. There are certain definite stages through which we pass, although the steps merge into each other more or less.

First, *solitude*. We take our minds away from people, away from our immediate battles, out of reach of all distractions, if possible. We go off for a walk, take refuge in a room and shut the door—anything to be alone. A poor woman in a tenement used to say, "I throw my apron over my head when I want solitude; it is all that I can get." It is recorded that when Jesus was trying to settle on the plan of his life, the spirit drove him into the wilderness.

Second, *awareness*. We have some mystic ability to be aware of possibilities before they have been realized. A doctor can be aware of an ideal for a man in his profession, long before he can put it to work in detail. And if we are to release better alternatives in life, we must somewhere have time for this awareness to be quickened. It becomes deadened by routine.

There is a mystery here, for this quickening is not something we do. It is done to us. When we are mentally worn out, tired of people, and our enthusiasms are dead, we often turn to nature, to have something done to us by that which is not man. We like to expose ourselves to that which mere man could not make, and become aware that we are not the makers and managers of the universe. For the same reason we take refuge in

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the silence of books, or in music and art, where we can expose ourselves to the best that reaches us through our race, and allow it to awaken our awareness. This is all much deeper than mere diversion, which helps us only to forget ourselves for a time.

Third, *self-examination*. The moment we become aware of finer alternatives that might be released in life, we turn inward to see what there is in our life that interferes. Alone, where we do not care what other people think or say, we seem able to be honest with ourselves, especially when our longing for life is dead in earnest. At this point we see in a new light obstructions we have overlooked. It is like stopping to find engine trouble in your car after you have limped along with no power to climb the hills. Sometimes we cannot find out, by ourselves, what is the matter, and we may need to go to others who will hear our story and, from an outside point of view, show us what our own minds failed to discern. When we are not able to see ourselves as others see us, it is because we are perhaps too near our own trouble, or are blinded by a failure or pet sin. Sometimes it may be that there is an inner twist of our mentality which only an expert can discover for us.

Fourth, *commitment*. After seeing what is the matter, we are ready to define where we readjust ourselves. Free from the pressure of action and conflict, we are more able to think clearly of what ought to be. But it is not

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enough to see what is wanted in general, because that is as useless as a general desire to have more power in your car when your spark plugs need cleaning. The garage man does not seek for power in general, but goes to the root of the trouble, sees in particular what needs to be done and commits himself to that. Handling life is an equally definite matter.

Fifth, *visualization*. It is an ancient law of nature that we move our wills by making a mental picture of ourselves and talking to ourselves about it until we "get the feel of it." We imagine being like some one else or see ourselves doing what is right in a situation where we have muddled things, and then we say to ourselves: "That is what I want to be; that is my real self around which I want to organize my living." This intensified picture is taken into the subconscious machinery of our mind, which God provided in our nature to bring the thoughts of our best moments into attention when a crisis demands them. If some old pictures and suggestions have been repeatedly talked into that subconscious, they are apt to come first into attention and take command. To offset them we must take time to build up this new set of suggestions by repetition and by committing ourselves in action that gives them expression.

## 2. THINKING AND PRAYING

*Can stopping to think be a substitute for what religion calls "prayer"?*

When any one becomes religious he does not leave behind this familiar formula of stopping to think and take up prayer as an entirely different thing. Prayer is this same practice, *plus* the sense of being related to God's whole system of activity that always supplements our effort in the world. By stopping to regulate our minds in this larger connection, we realize that we are opening channels for more to be set going than our human responsibility can account for.

It is reported that a professor of philosophy in a Russian university, engaged in a study of Communism and Christianity, makes a very suggestive interpretation of the revolutionary idea that "religion is an opiate of the people." He says that, in one sense, people need such an opiate to make them oblivious of national plans and all the difficulties of human action, so that in quiet they can be aware of more than human power working in the logic of events to supplement what they do. One cannot think of that easily when his mind is absorbed in the details of a daily task. Therefore he should take time to think of it specially, while he forgets the task. To become oblivious of problems in order to remember this larger setting is essential to courage and endurance. Stopping to think merges into prayer according as we

## THINKING AND PRAYING

are more or less conscious of our connections with this supplementing activity of God.

### *Of what use are traditional forms of prayer?*

They are worse than useless unless one knows what they are supposed to do for him. If one should take time to study the forms of worship which men have used in private devotions and in public services, he would find that they are all arranged to carry the mind through the stages just described. By the use of set phrases or music or dramatic acts, the mind is first isolated from human things; then led on to increased awareness of power and creativeness to which we owe everything that is given us to enjoy; then to introspection, where we experience a feeling, not simply of being ignorant, but of being out of harmony with some larger will that is making for increase of life for everybody together; and then to the commitment of oneself to be an effective instrument for getting that will expressed in the common life of our human family; after which one may use some phrase or motto or prayer which puts into a memorable form the picture of oneself in that larger connection.

### *Why should we so often repeat the "Lord's Prayer"?*

Simply because, as a matter of fact, it is the simplest and best statement of the formula which we are discussing.

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

One of America's greatest physicians, in talking to an audience of students on the art of keeping alive, recommended his own method of using a half hour just before going to sleep. First, take time to read from the greatest literature that lifts you completely out of whatever world you have been living in, and so fill the mind with the best thought of the human race. After that one may take the Lord's Prayer as a sort of framework for quiet thought. This prayer helps the mind to rise from the things of earth to a will that works through and beyond all human wills; and on from that to a sense of our shortcomings and transgressions. It should leave one with the feeling that his small life is in fact a part of a larger creative movement that is infinitely able to make use of him, in union with his fellows, for a growing purpose of good which is not simply in human hands—"for *thine* is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory forever."

In such a framework one's mind may leisurely face the particular problems of his life, according to the mood of the hour or the nature of the day through which he has just passed. The set form allows for an infinite variety of needs to be faced; and, like all forms, it should assist the mind to take wing and follow the inspiration of the moment whithersoever it leads.



## MAKING REQUESTS

### 3. MAKING REQUESTS

*Is there any religious short-cut for obtaining things we want?*

Primitive man, with his longing for life, used prayer as a means of obtaining natural wants, for he was ignorant of all that science has revealed. That ancient habit is long-lived. Some human prayers are like a man in New York asking God, who is up in the sky, to bring him some fruit from California, or send it to a friend in China, as though there were some divine and magical system of distribution distinct from the natural world.

The new revelation of scientific method is the truly providential way of releasing the healing powers and physical resources of God's universe. It is a way that is humble, reverent, sincere, obedient, seeking to adjust man's will to laws that are not his. And as this scientific method is enlisted in new forms of social engineering, it will help to change our social and economic life, that the benefits of nature and civilization may be more available to all those who make a needed contribution to the common life. There is no reason why we should not take all this in a religious spirit, as the permanent substitute for all short-cuts in finding and sharing what is already given in the physical part of nature.

*Should man seek to change God's will?*

Jesus said, "Your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." If God's life-giving process

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is acting constantly and not occasionally upon request, it is not so much a matter of changing God's will as releasing it. There is plenty for prayer to do on that higher level of regulating our minds to open channels that otherwise might be closed. How long men have lived in want because their minds were not disposed to seek new truth! How many are in want today, not because God has failed to supply enough, but because our minds are not disposed to plan the right distribution of wealth! How often God's healing forces are prevented by minds that need only to be set free from fear and preoccupation with self! It is human minds that need to be changed, not God's will.

*What is the point of expressing our desires to God?*

What happens when we allow our mind to entertain an idea of something that we want? The idea moves all the machinery of our mind and body in the direction of attainment. It stimulates the search for reasons why we should have what we want. It stirs up all our ingenuity. It enlists our talking powers, by which we gain the help of others. What we have in mind tends to be accomplished unless we replace it by another idea. New channels are opened that otherwise would have been closed. This system works out a bad idea or a good idea with equal certainty, hence the importance of taking

## MAKING REQUESTS

our desires where we may see if they really are directed toward the alternative we would like to have released.

So it is when we entertain an idea concerning the good of some one else. That good idea banishes any ill-will that might have been keeping us inactive. It purifies our intentions. It starts us planning. It brings along a suggestion of something we might do. That may induce other people to act and they may influence others. Thus currents of influence are set going that never would have been unless we had allowed that idea to command our mind. An idea bearing ill-will to another works in the same way. It prevents good-will from action, and permits wrong impressions and false gossip to pass without hindrance. It thus shuts off from another a supply of influence that might have been set free for his good. All ideas of ill-will inevitably proceed this way, whether we know it or not. Likewise when we say depressing things to ourselves and fill our minds with thoughts of fear, we give over our lives to ideas that tend to make us in their image.

Obviously, under the operation of such a system, we have need of bringing our ideas and desires to judgment, where, under the highest influence we can find, they may appear in a true light.

If we think of God as the influence that awakens our awareness of more and more that is worth our devotion, then we can understand how the rarest lives have

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used this secret reference of all their desires to God, with the prayer "Not my will, but Thine be done." That is not a negative surrender, but a positive passion to have one's mind made up in the right direction. Persistence in seeking this higher judgment of all desires develops a life that is ever seeking and asking and knocking at the door of truth, desiring only to know the best that can be made out of every situation. Such eagerness to know, such readiness to respond and have one's life worked through in the direction of human need, results in a personality through whom more can be made to happen than any human mind can ask or think. The chain of connections with other lives is indefinitely extended, so that from one centre influence goes forth to multiply action in ways impossible to foresee. This natural procedure is God's method by which He has made incalculable use of individuals who practise freeing themselves from the domination of selfish desires.

### 4. GUIDANCE

*Is there any guidance available from a source beyond human minds?*

It will help to clear our minds if we think of guidance as the *problem of keeping the spirit free to see new light*. In all lines of life we are always needing to acquire fresh insight and become more sensitive to what is needed. This procedure might be illustrated most naturally as it

## GUIDANCE

appears in people who are not assuming to be religious. It always involves a quiet *facing away from men* in order to receive fresh light. In that waiting mood our minds seem to be reached by truth from the depths of our own experience, from our contacts with our fellow men, and from beyond man's best.

For instance, here is an artist who has listened to men to gather all available knowledge to see what people want, what they will buy, what is popular and profitable. Then if he is a truly great artist, he will go a step farther and face away from men to be aware of some excellence or truth or beauty that he feels must be expressed, no matter what the passing taste of men might demand. He refuses to let anything human stand between him and that light which dawns upon him. He will spare no pains until he paints or writes the thing as he sees it.

So a scientist faces the opinions of men, takes advantage of all knowledge he can find, and then faces away from all that men have thought for new meaning to dawn upon him.

We are sure that human minds do not hold all there is to know. Put together all that experts can tell, all that the proletariat thinks, all that is given by dictators, and other human sources, and still we have not begun to reach the final word as to what truth is and what life may be. Over against all human standards, opinions,

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and plans, over against our readiness to let well enough alone, there is this eternal source of more light which never permits us to take the present as though it were enough. Here is where our finite life comes under the claim of the infinite. Here is where the pressure of the eternal makes itself felt amid the temporal. The last word as to what life should mean is always there and not in human minds at all. And if for personal and human reasons we refuse to be aware of more we need to know, we invite disaster.

*Is there any difference between the guidance received by a moral man and by a religious man?*

The best answer to that question might be found in a little *Autobiography of a Philosopher* by one of the venerable professors of Harvard. There he gives a simplified definition of the difference between a religious life and a moral life. He says that no act is essentially religious, because its religious character depends on how it is approached. In the religious approach we face God; in the moral approach we face our fellow men; and each is supplemental to the other. Looking toward men we find what men have thought and what is expedient and practical. But that must be supplemented by facing away from men where we sense truth which men have not realized and which needs to be understood and perhaps made practical before it is too late.

## GUIDANCE

Take the example of the old Quaker, John Woolman, a hunchbacked little gnome, who, single-handed, was one of the first to start the battle against slavery in this country. He said, "I find that to be a fool as to worldly wisdom and to commit my cause to God, not fearing to offend men, is the only way to remain unmoved at the sentiments of others." That is a one-sided statement, perhaps, but the practice of facing toward the divine love as embodied in Jesus kept his spirit free to see light that most men did not want to see. As Whittier said of him, he beset a "slave-holding Quakerism like a chestnut burr clinging to the skirts of its respectability and settling like a pertinacious gad-fly on the sore places of its conscience." And John Woolman was conscious that the light of love which he saw had more than human power behind it. Listen to his words. "Should we now be sensible of what God requires of us, and through a respect to the private interests of some persons, or through a regard to some friendships, neglect to do our duty in firmness (with relation to slavery)—God may, by terrible things in righteousness, answer us in this matter." And so it happened.

Here it is plain that what a man does with his mind when he wants fresh insight is to open it on the side that is away from men where he will be as free as possible from all human bias and confusion. He wishes to come into a position where he is least influenced by

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

any prejudices or fears, where he can see the problem in its largest setting, apart from cluttering details, where he is delivered from pleasing men by compromise, and where the deepest and best in himself and in human experience may most readily come to mind.

Curiously enough, this state of mind has a very close affinity with a religious state of mind. We lose our bias and personal prejudice where we become sensitive to some part of God's purpose for the good of all, which is more significant than any little private concern of our own. And we rise out of distracting fears as we realize that we are linked with a purpose "mightier than any man" which supplements our effort to keep the way open for new developments. Thus we attain the state of mind wherein we are most apt to see more light. The guidance of God is not entirely different from this, but works through just this procedure.

With Jesus, this facing away from men toward God—going off on a mountain or into a closet with a shut door—brought fellowship with an active will at work in creation like a great love seeking to impart life.

### *How definite can guidance be?*

It is generally dangerous to think of guidance as directly dictated in detail, because it is difficult for any one to keep a clear line between his own preference and a word from God. What we want is to be made more



## RECUPERATION

quick to detect wrong that has been overlooked, more sensitive to what is needed, more ready to see a broader point of view, more alive to people and causes that want us. This is not a substitute for our intelligence, but *a process of heightening our appreciation.*

Often no clear, unmistakable light can be found. In that case, after trying, as suggested, to reach the most teachable state of mind, one must take what light he can see and experiment with it where experience can correct and clarify his vision. Along these lines sincere and persistent people do acquire a surer and finer sense of what life demands of them. "In thy light, we shall see light."

### 5. RECUPERATION

*Can we restore our courage by will power?*

We have a curious inability to restore ourselves when worn out. When our body is tired or when we are mentally fatigued, nature gives us an anæsthetic, puts us to sleep and turns loose her restoring powers. The same is true when our spirits are worn down by friction with people and the resistance of the world. We cannot revive our own spirits. We seek out influences that refresh us. People who have the secret of this recuperation are the life-giving, life-radiating personalities who keep the world alive.

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

### *How do we recapture the power of our purpose?*

The purpose of life does not stay strong without some method of recuperation. When we become occupied with details and the practical resistance of life, our purpose falls into the background. We find ourselves becoming stale, wondering whether our effort is worth while. If we specialize in some line, we grow narrow and lose our bearings. If we are in earnest, we become over-discouraged with our faults. When life presses us to action, we decide before we are sure and thus weaken our sense of truth. The purpose of life suffers under the preoccupation with action. And the only cure for this is to take time out, where, without effort, we can see our particular enterprise as a part of the ongoing movement for good which includes and goes beyond our human plans. As we recover that sense of relation to a larger, undefeatable whole—as though we were one expression of the divine will operating in the interrelated system of life—our courage and meaning and power are restored for us. Out of this grows the consciousness of being recognized, understood and given a place.

### *What is the secret of preserving the "force of character"?*

It is a matter of regulating the inner life by fellowship with others who renew our awareness of that divine spirit which fills characters like Jesus with such life-

## RECUPERATION

giving power. An old Quaker put this into words when he said, "There is a spirit that I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. Its life is everlasting love unfeigned. It takes its kingdom by entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind." Recovering the freshness of that impression is what has kept the force of men's lives growing.

Think over people in a community and note how their influence is made. Some make an impression by their activity, always doing things; others by their talk, always saying things; others by their social gift, always giving a good time; others by possessions, always using money. But some make their impression by what they are; it is the force of their inner character that counts. This product of the regulation of the inner life may not be noisy and obtrusive; it may often appear defeated as it was once on a cross; but it is the most permeating, transforming, triumphant force in all this world of ours. To keep where one can be more and more aware of that spirit which the Quaker described is to be connected with power that may give one's life a universal significance, an irresistible force, fearless independence and a joy that passeth all understanding.

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

### 6. HANDLING THE INEVITABLE

#### *What can be done with frustrated desires?*

Historically there have been three ways of meeting the failures of life.

(A) The stoic way is exemplified, on its lowest level, by the turtle, who, when he meets some inevitable difficulty, simply crawls into his shell and takes what comes. He retreats inward. When we must give up one fond desire after another, we can withdraw into an inner life of honor and sincerity and high purpose where we find satisfaction even under outward affliction.

"Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody but unbowed."

Certainly no one can go far in life without at least a minimum of this stoic readiness to meet the inevitable.

However, this attitude alone is too passive. It is too much like resigning to fate. It lacks the righteous indignation that drives one out of his shell to bear responsibility for righting wrongs. Fancy underprivileged and oppressed people arriving anywhere in this power-ridden world by the stoic way alone!

(B) Also there is the oriental way of escape into contemplation of the supreme good. A recent book describes it thus: "In times when a highly developed civilization is in a state of decay, as in ancient India, . . .

## HANDLING THE INEVITABLE

the will to live is weakened in noble-minded individuals, and joyous faith in concrete aims and tasks collapses. A vehement dislike of the world and civilization seizes them, a burning desire for an infinite good gives them no rest and urges them to free themselves from civilization and society." Where the outer way of life seems blocked men have tried this inner way to return to the infinite and the divine from which they came.

The mystic tries to put himself in a sort of ecstasy or trance by abandoning all desire, all passion, even thought, in order to reach a perfect cessation of conscious life. He has elaborate methods of relaxing the body and the mind; he has formulas to repeat over and over to carry his mind to God. So by losing himself in contemplation of the infinite good he identifies himself with it and sinks into it as a raindrop sinks into the sea.

The difficulty with this is that responsibility for the world is left to others, and passive contemplation may become a mere spiritual luxury. In countries where this mysticism prevails it is often difficult to stir its devotees to indignation over the most outrageous wrongs for which they should have a special responsibility. Much depends on the notion of God that lies behind this mystic way. If God is thought of as a loving, active will, then this time for escaping from the world to concen-

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

trate for long periods on God begets tremendous personal power and profound concern for the sufferings of men. A modern Buddhist monk interprets this practice to escape from desire, as an effort to identify oneself with the love of God that can have no peace until all mankind is brought into fuller life.

Jesus had a way of keeping his will identified with God in times of quiet apart, but without elaborate technique to produce abnormal states of mind; and when he came out of his retirement it was with a burning sense of responsibility for a loveless world, and with no fear of failure, not even of death.

(C) Another way, which includes the best of the other two, is to take failure as an opening to some fresh alternative. Jesus is responsible for making this widely known as *a way of accepting the inevitable without resigning to it*. In the history of religion you find samples of this in people who pour out their desperate desires to God until pressure is relieved, so to speak. They allow all the pent-up longing for life to explode; they "get it out of their system." And after this clearing out, there comes a serene readiness to be shown some alternative possibility to which one may commit his whole life.

An illustration, not obviously religious, is found in the world of working people, who, as individuals, face hopeless failure in defending themselves from injustice

## RENUNCIATION

and oppression. After energetic protest against failure, they work past these desires for personal rights and find an alternative in uniting with others of their kind in a new venture for life together. The blocked individual reaches the chance of a new committal of his life to something more significant than his own welfare.

Jesus put back of this the faith that in failure and frustration God is showing up some fault in our human scheme and indicating new alternatives. So he faced his death, first with a passionate expression of his desire to escape it: "Father, save me from this hour." Then, working past this personal desire to live, he reached that mood of serenity in which he was ready to let God use him in death to make plain for all time the winning power of love that suffers for the bigoted sin of the world.

### 7. RENUNCIATION

*Why do we develop at times an intense desire to escape from ourselves?*

These pessimistic moods are sometimes due to nervous disorders, but under normal conditions they are signs that we have honestly discovered where our life is meaningless. In youth we are often baffled by periods when the interest fades out of living. Some try to drown the feeling in drink, or make up for its dullness by seeking excitement in a social whirl.

## THE ART OF KEEPING ALIVE

It is always better to withdraw into the stillness of one's soul and face this pessimism to discover why life is not giving us what we want. In most cases we find that our life has become centred around some childish motives of self-concern. These motives arrive first in life, but were never supposed to remain central. They are our least effective motives, and when they stand in the way of a more satisfactory result we are warned by feelings of self-disgust.

The practice of taking stock of life and renouncing what is meaningless is a vital element in the art of keeping alive. A square look at ourselves in the light of the highest we know reveals a sorry picture that is enough to make us pessimistic. Some American advertisers recently published a list of people's motives to which it is most profitable for business to appeal: snob-bishness, a desire to have what others have not, fear of what others will think, ambition to make a show, passion to keep up with the neighbors. There is a sample of life organized around childish motives. If we look like that inside, we ought to feel pessimistic.

The turn comes in life when we take time out to face the situation honestly, abandon all this petty greed and self-seeking, and set ourselves free for something which would be worth while for everybody. Our pessimism results from trying to live two lives at once: we want to satisfy our childish pride and selfishness, and



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at the same time we want to count for something in the world. We are seeking to be outwardly important when we know we are inwardly insignificant. A renunciation that gets rid of one of these lives is the only hope.

Again and again we must take time out for honest moments to see our real selves—and renounce the childish self with fierce satisfaction.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A COMMERCIALIZED WORLD

ONE HUNDRED years hence, mankind will wonder how we could ever have been insane enough to suppose that we could run the life of the world for profit. An historian has remarked that the future will look back on the period preceding and following the Great War as the "stupidest era of human history." The commercial interest climbed into the saddle and drove our civilization at top speed to a colossal breakdown. Enormous energy was released, inventive genius reached unparalleled heights, huge funds were made available for benevolent causes, and the physical conveniences of life multiplied by leaps and bounds. Permanent and inestimable gains were made on which posterity will live; but the spirit of exploitation wrought its own doom—it was never meant to rule the earth. How our faith has fared in this commercialized world will be discussed in this chapter.

#### I. THE FATAL CONTRADICTION

##### *Is love impracticable?*

Nothing is more important than to admit the growing contradiction between the religion men profess and the

## THE FATAL CONTRADICTION

present organization of the world on a pagan basis. This is one reason why Russia repudiated religion altogether in the Communist revolution, and it is the cause of the growing aloofness of working people everywhere from conventional faith.

The conflict is exemplified in a man who had been driven into Communism in this country by the long tragedy of unemployment. "You people talk easily about a kind and loving God," he said, "who, like a father, will take care of us and protect us. If you lived where I do and met the people I meet, you would grow bitter as gall over that sort of talk. What good would it do for the millions of unemployed people on the edge of starvation to pray for help from that God? You can hold that sort of belief when you are comfortable and have what you need; but there is no supernatural help for the working people coming from outside to do what we will have to do ourselves. We must trust science to obtain the resources of the universe; we must organize industry for the sake of all who are in it, and govern finance so that the people can control the social credit. We must acquire a better physical basis for life so that more people can rise above mere material struggle to the spiritual interests, where life is richer and more satisfying. We put our trust in economic necessity, which can be depended upon to move the world out of the ruts in which the well-to-do wish to stay. Your whole

church paraphernalia seems to be designed to make comfortable people more so."

See how it appears at the other end of society. Here is what some men faced in a brokerage firm. The head of the concern, during a time of widespread business depression, came to his salesmen and said, "Gentlemen, there is no business. We must make some. We must go out and induce people to change their investments, even though we may have to persuade them to take some securities that are not as good as those which they now hold." If these men did not want to lose their jobs, they had to put their religious scruples aside. It was just such experience that drove a young business man into the sort of atheism which considered the world a jungle, and man a wolf, fighting for his mate and cubs against his kind who fought for theirs. In the presence of that harsh commercialism, what wonder that religion seems like a sentimental extra!

In the war situation, also, we are involved in a system which makes us murderers when all our religious principles are against it. In a certain men's class there arose a heated discussion on the question of Christianity and war. One man in the group said that he believed in Christianity's teaching about brotherhood and goodwill, but that when it came to war you just had to leave your Christianity behind and go in to kill. The two simply would not mix, so he believed in both. That is typical

## THE IDEAL AND THE PRACTICAL

of the confusion we are in. When it comes to a national crisis, it would seem that our religion of love and goodwill is too good to be true.

We have been caught with our religion in a world organized on the basis of competition for material profit, with nationalism claiming right of way over a fellowship of the human race, and with ultimate reliance on force. We live in a conflict between what we have to do and what we ought to do; and the tendency is to do what we have to do first, justify it any way we can and make some compromise with the ideals of our faith.

### 2. THE IDEAL AND THE PRACTICAL

*In matters of right and wrong, is compromise sometimes a necessity?*

When duty conflicts with what we desire to do, it is a fairly simple procedure to change our desire; but it is a very different thing when we have to participate in the life of an imperfect world, under conditions which we know are wrong but which we cannot change at will. We cannot resign from the planet, and we cannot perfect it at once. How can one do what he ought to do, while he is involved in things that are not as they ought to be? If we start to compromise, where shall we draw the line?

This is of course an old problem—this conflict between the ideal and the practical—and in our western world we have tried various ways to relieve it.

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There has been *the way of escape*. The hermit and the recluse have retired from the wicked world; but the technique of escape simply left to others the real problem of handling the affairs on which the recluse and all of us depend. Not only individuals, but colonies of people have withdrawn from the world where they could make a better life possible all by themselves.

Then there was *the way of compromise*. Reacting from the idea that you should express religion in retirement and religious devotions, men claimed that Christ emphasized the expression of the religious spirit in daily life and work. Faithfulness, thrift, hard work, honesty, readiness to serve—these virtues should characterize a worker in the Lord's vineyard. Hence the profits from such work would seem to be blessed of God, even though industrialism led men on to exploiting their fellow men to make the profits. Thus, under cover of religious respectability, there grew up the commercialism which brought on the World War and all the agonies that came after.

Another way was to *combine the ways of escape and compromise*. Let some people retire into monasteries and lead saintly lives away from evil surroundings; let the rest of the people live on a lower level of morality, made necessary by a world that is fallen in sin. The Church, meanwhile, will hold the power of forgiveness and salvation and the keys to heaven.

## THE IDEAL AND THE PRACTICAL

Finally, there is the *way of becoming morally hardened* to the whole situation. This is most common and most dangerous. When a condition proves hard to change at once, it is taken for granted, as though it were right. It is accepted as part of the nature of things and excused by the old saying that you cannot change human nature.

*How can we relieve the conflict between the ideal and the practical?*

The answer is, we should not relieve it at all. The creative people, through whom movements for change have gotten under way, refused to escape the strain of this conflict. They felt it and made other people feel it, until the tension grew so widespread that something had to be done to change things. That is what Lincoln did. That is what all national deliverers have done. Thus all our social changes have come. Today a man lives amid the fierce pressure of compromising politics, the persuasion of powerful corporations, the competition of business, and the evasion of human duties for the sake of profit. He is involved in everything he hates. Our hope is in that man who does not escape; who does not become hardened; who keeps alive the struggle between what we ought to do and what we have to do in the present, and spreads that tension all over this land.

The rule with such men seems to be: if you have to

be a martyr to the cause, don't be a martyr at first—leave that for the last of the struggle. Keep your head on your shoulders as long as you can. Protest without fear or hypocrisy. Enlighten people. Enlist a group of kindred spirits. As long as possible, take opposition and failure and success as all in the game of keeping the tension growing. If dangerous opposition develops, then every man has to decide just how much of a martyr he wants to be. The more of a price he pays for his stand, the more effective he will be in the world.

This was Jesus' strategy. He hated the hypocritical religious system of his day, but he lived in it, and attended the synagogues to share the life of his people. However, he never admitted that the system was right. He spoke out; he never hedged. Wherever he went the conflict increased between what was and what ought to be. As opposition grew, he kept out of the way for a time until he could train twelve men. Then he took the battle up to headquarters in Jerusalem, fought the money-changers in the temple, told the leaders to their faces that they were hypocrites and enemies of the people, and announced to the Roman Empire and all concerned that he stood for a way of life which would be the deadly foe of tyranny for all time.

This is the way of living which Jesus considered religious. It is the creative way of working with the imperfect to make something better come out of it. What-



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ever work God is doing with our world and the universe, it is not like the immediate imposition of a perfect ideal. Each situation is met in turn to get some improvement out of it. Much is endured that is not as it ought to be; but there is a time limit. Wherever the second-best is left too long, it is shown up by tragedy and pain. Nothing is ever allowed to be settled until it is settled rightly.

### 3. THE DIVINE "TENSION"

*Is human ambition sufficient to overcome the inertia of humanity?*

Smugness in a settled situation would be the death of us—if it were permitted to continue. We have to deal in the end with a disturbing factor which is more than human. It has been described as a "tension" which never permits the present to have the final word; but this is not to be identified with the mere excitement and pressure and overstrain of our hectic life. It is far more mysterious and real than that. Over against our human readiness to stop with what we have, over against all our human opinions and standards and plans, there is an eternal antagonism which never finally allows us to take the present as a substitute for what we may become.

In our individual lives we live—if we really live—by this ceaseless "tension" between the person we now are

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and some infinitely finer life that beckons from beyond and will not let us go. Out in the tumultuous world, we see human self-sufficiency shaken on every hand in the presence of a universal "tension" between an out-moded method of life and new developments which are yet beyond our knowledge. Apart from this insistent influence, life tends to narrow down, or level out, or slow up, until some catastrophe makes us realize what we had forgotten. This is one way of understanding how the activity of God can take a hand in our human affairs.

*Is human reason sufficient for solving human problems?*

No, because it is always dependent on an authority beyond the reach of reason. That does not mean the authority is unreasonable, as though it belonged in some realm of magic and superstition; but our reason never can have the final say because there is always something stubborn beyond reason which decides whether our best thought is right or wrong. Once a boy reasoned out the conviction that an umbrella would make a fine parachute with which to leap safely from the roof of a two-story building near his home. When the umbrella turned inside out and let him down with a bump which shook his faith, the catastrophe made him aware of a severe difference between his reason and an unrecog-

## THE DIVINE "TENSION"

nized authority which asserted that his idea was not to be taken as final.

That stubbornness beyond our best thought is what the scientist faces and relies upon. We say he is a man who lives by reason alone, but his reason is ever being corrected by an unalterable order that is forever superior to all the scientific knowledge of mankind put together. Into all our temporary human judgments of life and truth comes this conflict with something eternally above our best. We are apt to be more aware of it in our catastrophes than in our times of smugness, when we are least alive.

*Can human inertia prevent the unknown from becoming known?*

Men often say that what is beyond our knowledge is simply the unknown, and because the unknown is mysterious it has seemed supernatural. Just as soon as we know it, it becomes perfectly natural; and if we keep on knowing, we will gradually reduce everything to the natural within the range of our reason. There is some truth here, but not a great deal. That unknown beyond does not simply lie there waiting to be known, like the South Pole, which would make no complaint if we prevented explorers from finding it. All along men have been opposed to learning new truth that might upset their settled opinions and disturb their life. Yet in the

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nature of things and in the logic of events, there works a will higher than all human opposition, which manœuvres us into a crisis, where we must either make way for something infinitely better or expect something worse. Man can *release the alternatives*, but that is all he can do.

You recall Dickens' famous story, the *Christmas Carol*, in which he pictures the transformation of the old miser Scrooge, who, in his selfishness, wished to isolate himself from all people around him. In a dream, various spirits come to the miser and journey through the earth with him, first to let him partake in the better life that he might enjoy and, after a taste of that, to give him a living experience of the end to which his present life is coming by an inevitable logic which no human effort can oppose. When his appetite for the finer life has been whetted to the utmost, Scrooge is taken to see his own death in a miserable hovel, deserted of all men, and a grave in the potter's field where, on a neglected tombstone, he reads his own name. There he comes to this conclusion. "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends to which, if persisted in, they *must* lead. But if the courses be departed from the ends will change. . . . I will not be the man I must have been but for this inter-course."

In the inexorable logic of life we deal with a higher will, which allows us only to choose an alternative between something better and something worse.

## THE DIVINE "TENSION"

### *Is our civilization assured of steady progress?*

Our familiar little world may be *brought to an end* so that out of its death a better world might emerge. History does not show an even progress upward. It reveals human inertia and then smug civilizations brought to an end that new life might be released.

The ancient Hebrews, when hopeless before foreign powers, expressed this truth in a picturesque faith that divine intervention would destroy this hostile world and usher in a new heaven and a new earth. Back of this quaint imagery, there is an eternal fact. Spengler, in his *Decline of the West*, revives it in a negative way, showing that events are conspiring, regardless of all our desires, to bring our form of civilization to an end. His prophecy is right, unless we release some other alternative. His hopelessness helps our contented world to see where its present course, if unchanged, will inevitably conclude.

In a more optimistic vein, and on the material level, Karl Marx and his followers have preached this same doctrine without religious words. They are aware that some undefeatable necessity, working in the very nature of society, will upset this world where it does not want to move, and, despite all our entrenched power, usher in a change.

All this illustrates the deadly earnestness and the hope-

fulness of power superior to human opposition, which never leaves us alone to conduct progress in our own way and in our own time.

#### 4. INDIVIDUALISM

*Will freedom of individuals make for the common good?*

Not where you have a society that considers money-making to be the dominant interest in life. And unfortunately that is the pattern of life which has been favored in our capitalist society. Every society, by the way it distributes its prizes of power and privilege, creates a type of leader who sets the pace, so to speak, for popular ambition. Whatever may be the merits of capitalism as an economic system, it has tended to elevate the man with the idea of making profit first and of being charitable with it afterward.

The worst consequence is the perversion of ambition thus produced. Young people acquire the vague notion that if somehow they could accumulate money, they could later do good with it in benevolent actions that would cost no sacrifice, reduce their income tax and add to their glory. Invest the best of life in a ruthless economic game which threatens to wreck society, and then with the proceeds dispense some benefactions! Why not be a man who can do the good while he is working—why just make money to pay others to do it? Instead

of hiring experts to do the interesting work, why not be an expert, even a humble one? Instead of furnishing funds to the creators, why not be a creator yourself?

We assume we cannot get leadership unless big profits are the incentive. We have tried that incentive and look where the leadership brought us. One man received a million and a half in four years and was given a hundred thousand dollars annually for retirement allowance—and his was the kind of leadership that shook the nation's confidence in our banking system. The simple answer to this problem is perfectly apparent: the leadership that cannot be stimulated except by inordinate profit is not the leadership we want. We have had enough of it.

## 5. CLASS CONFLICT

*What has been the dangerous weakness in our idea of freedom for individuals?*

It has brought us into the unconscious habit of living on other people. Our society has been based on a hidden cannibalism. In frontier days, a man could live an almost self-sufficient life in his log cabin, but it was a slim life. The larger life we live today cannot be made by one person. In America, it takes some forty million people to run the system of work that sustains the daily routine of each of us. And they are only part of the story. In one way and another it takes most of the human race

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to make the kind of life one man lives today. We can live more richly because we can put behind each individual the collective effort of all his fellows.

The danger is that we will use other people to meet our wants, and feel no responsibility for their chance of living.

*Why does individualism tend to divide a country into classes?*

Because some people, with privilege and power, obtain possession of the sources of living on which others depend, and exploit them for private profit. One class controls the chance to work, and another class is told when it can work and for how much.

Here is a picturesque illustration of this tendency. Our fate might be likened to that of the poor cormorant, the sea bird who has a unique skill in diving for fish, but who is now employed by the Chinese to do their fishing for them. Tethered by a string, with wings clipped and a loose iron ring about his throat, he dives for the big fish which he can never swallow but must give up to his master, who in return will feed him with a minnow that can pass through the ring on his neck. The cormorants earn more than they get, and the surplus profit of fish gives power to the man who controls their sources of living. The enterprise has become co-operative, but the profit remains individual. Should the



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owners of the cormorants unite in monopolies, financed by the banks to control the fishing business, we might imagine how a fish-eating public could then be persuaded that business, so vital to every one's life, should be free from hampering control of the state. Thus a great public utility could be run as a stock gambling game for profit, with overproduction regardless of community needs, until there followed the inevitable crash and depression. And there is the poor cormorant, unemployed, supported by public relief, sitting idle on the waterfront with his wings clipped, looking longingly out at a sea full of fish for the catching! The few shares of stock he might have been encouraged to buy could not give him control of his sources of living.

Thus it happened to us. We have unconsciously arrived where we are by "letting nature take her course." Now, as a keen observer has said, the people of the world have resolved to let nature take her costly course no longer. "The ideal that a social order can and should be planned and managed has taken root among the people themselves, and the sovereign power is in their hands. This is a revolution in the outlook of mankind." We are learning to take workable ideas from any system in sight. We are in the position of Mark Twain, who said he was resolved to keep within his means if he had to borrow money to do it. The struggle is now on to find ways to control the main sources of living, not for the

profit of part of the nation, but for the welfare of the whole population.

## 6. THE PROFIT MOTIVE

*Can we do without the profit motive?*

That is too theoretical a question. The profit motive is here and it will be here in any form of society for a long time to come. It becomes bad only when it takes first place—as a secondary motive it might play a healthy part in life.

We have been trying to live a Christian life in a social order which gives the self-seeking profit motive the dominant position. We have tried to be brotherly on a fighting basis, and as Jesus once predicted, that kind of compromise is harder than driving a camel through the needle's eye.

The true way to look at this problem is to realize that two distinct types of life are struggling for supremacy in our western world. One is *the commercial way*. It orders life's motives thus. First acquire possessions, then such position and power as these can give; and, if possible, co-operate with others to perform some useful function in society. The other is *the creative way*. First perform with others some necessary function in society, then be ready for whatever power and position such usefulness brings, and acquire, if possible, such necessary possessions as service permits.

## THE PROFIT MOTIVE

These two ways have the same set of motives but in reverse order. One gives precedence to the acquiring passion. It develops the possessive type of man, who loves dominance and patronizing charity. The other gives precedence to the creative passion. It develops the creative type of person, who thrives on co-operation and who holds that the work to be done is more vital than its profits. These two ways are inextricably mixed, the creative way cropping up in the commercial world, and the commercial way creeping in to corrupt our creative and professional life; and both of them often struggling together in an individual.

Yet they are distinct, and their results work out in directions as far apart as heaven and hell. For well over a hundred years the commercial way has had the upper hand in our western world, and the World War was its logical result. Since then the co-operative, creative way has been capturing attention. The conflict at this point is the main issue in our civilization. Insistence is growing that the function a man can perform with his fellows in society shall count more all around than his ability to acquire possessions. Any education or training that does not give a man a right mind toward this fundamental problem of life can hardly justify itself today.

Take the case of a college man asking for advice on this matter. He said that he wanted to give his life to the diplomatic service of his country, but he knew that

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the highest posts in that profession were only open to men with private means. He wanted to marry, which complicated matters still more. He therefore wondered if he had better go into the bond business for a time, make all the money he could and then be ready to serve his country. His case was so typical of the way people think about life-work, that it was submitted to five leading men for their opinion: the Secretary of State, a member of the Supreme Court, a professor of Christian Ethics, a nationally known business man, and the Socialist candidate for the Presidency.

The Washington officials did not meet the moral issue and simply advised hopefully about a diplomatic career. The other three agreed that a man who started out merely to make money, in order later to serve society, generally had to compromise with his ideal. They also felt that doing business in that spirit caused the terrible complications in the world which diplomacy finally had to meet. Why spend half of life making the problems which later you would try to solve? The Socialist and the professor both felt that the best work for diplomacy in the future was to be done by the experts who furnished the facts regardless of political and national bias, and thus give the basis for just decisions. Therefore a man had better start at the bottom, learn his profession, and let the high posts take care of themselves. And the business man sounded an impressive Amen. He ad-

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vised that a man should take a field of interest, which was important and which would give satisfaction whatever the profit, and serve to the limit of his ability, allowing all other things to follow. It is significant that the best thinking of today is converging on the necessity of a co-operative, creative spirit in the work of the world as the only hope of escape from the warring commercialism that puts the profit motive first. Where this does not come by voluntary action, some form of control will arise to make way for it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

THE future of humanity depends on our working together to do collectively more than we can do each by himself. Science has prospered because scientists have become so interrelated, the world over, that they can exchange ideas freely, regardless of national boundaries and racial or religious prejudice. After the same manner we shall learn, perhaps through catastrophes that may wreck the competitive civilization in which we have lived, that God ordained a common life on this planet, so interrelated that where one part suffers all suffer and where the full development of each is necessary to make the life which all can share.

As life becomes thus more complex, its problems are more involved. There is much that an individual cannot change alone. There are vast issues which he cannot understand. The selfishness of groups is too much for him to face. He is inclined to drift along, but the world cannot be allowed to drift with him. This means that our common life must be to some extent a *managed life*, under pressure and restraint. In that situation the independence and initiative of the individual will be at

## LIMITATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

stake, and we shall have once more the ancient problem to preserve the freedom of the human spirit. Each generation must work out a new balance between the common welfare and the freedom of personality.

In this chapter we can only hint at the problems with which our faith must come to terms.

### I. LIMITATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

*If we simply cultivate our private individual lives, will a good society naturally follow?*

We are more in a fog on this point than most people think. Obviously no society can be sustained by bad people; therefore it would seem that if we mind the private affairs of character, the public affairs of the world will become what we want them to be. This is the pet illusion of education and religion.

To avoid misunderstanding, let it be said with emphasis that our private individual life is of primary importance. The enrichment of the individual is what finally makes for the enrichment of society, and any social order which smothers the individual development will ultimately impoverish itself. Also, as far as we are personally concerned, we shall have our private problems to deal with in any form of society. Even in the best of circumstances, it may be hell for some people just to live with themselves. In the last analysis we are sepa-

rate individuals, in the sense that we face problems and decisions with which we alone can deal. Whatever religion and education can contribute to these personal problems will always bulk largest in the minds of the majority of individuals. We might further add that in the days ahead, the influence of one individual with a mind that really thinks straight, and a spirit dominated by love, is the most potent force we know for the remaking of society.

*Where does confidence in the individual become an illusion?*

The illusion begins where we assume that our private life is the only life we live. We live two lives. In addition to this all-important private life, we are part of a collective, public life which we all make together, and which no one can change at once by his own will. As a matter of fact, this collective life in our world is so far below the level of our individual standard that most of us are baffled and horrified by it.

Charles Dickens, in his *David Copperfield*, draws an inimitable picture of the business firm of Spenlow and Jorkins. Mr. Spenlow was inclined to be a kind-hearted man in all his business dealings. His partner, Jorkins, was a hard-headed money-grabber. Mr. Spenlow had always to submit his kinder wishes to the harder judgments of his partner, and Mr. Jorkins always decided



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contrary to Mr. Spenlow's good intentions. In that partnership, Mr. Spenlow never could express the man he really was. As we look back on the War, it grows clearer that we were tied up with something that would not let us be the people we really were; that public life was a sort of average of what the best and the worst of us together produced. Mr. Spenlow could resign from his partnership with Jorkins. We could not resign from our partnership in public life. We depended on it for our very existence and for great ends which can only be attained by the common will.

Our case revealed itself with the outbreak of the War which this public life brought down upon us. We had two choices left. We could go in, but that meant murder. We could stay out, but that meant a desertion of those who were in the trenches. Either way, there was something which our conscience was against. We faced two evils. Now we see that the individual always suffers thus when our public life is far behind our private standards.

Obviously our private life may be part of a collective life that makes us act like a race of fiends. Anybody who says that religion and education can simply deal with the individual, as though this collective life were not there to reckon with, is living in a sentimental illusion.

## 2. GROUPISM

*Will not improvement of individuals ultimately improve our public life?*

To be sure, but we are apt to overlook an ominous fact when trusting in individual improvement. *We cannot wait to make over enough individuals.* To understand that may be hard for privileged people, but those millions who are underprivileged, facing years with no chance to work, see the point more plainly. Hard-pressed masses have little use for this idea that we can wait on in a starving state until we convert enough individuals to love their neighbors. It is so easy to say, "If only we could educate individuals enough, if we could have enough people with the spirit of Christ, all would be well." We have been saying that for a long time, but what is going to happen before we reach that happy state of having enough people with the spirit of Christ in their hearts and real intelligence in their heads? The happy time is a long way off, judging by our present pace, and in the meantime, while we are waiting, our collective life may overtake us with some horrible disaster. We have had some lessons to that effect. We talked this sentimental way about what would happen if only we had enough citizens of the right sort, and before we had enough our collective life dragged us into the War, and then into the depression. Unless some-

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thing is done collectively to change things, it may lead us to conditions still worse in the future.

### *What is to replace individualism?*

Nobody quite knows. Experiments are now in progress the world over in what might be called "*groupism*." What individuals cannot do alone may be done by a group acting collectively. This is not new. We did not wait until we could induce all parents to educate their own children. We knew that illiteracy would be the death of the republic if we waited; so together as a group, we built an educational system which would give children a chance at culture, while we were waiting to improve their parents to the point where they could see education as a good thing.

Morally, as we have said before, this groupism may be on the same level as individualism—individuals together striving for what they could not obtain alone. Nevertheless a mutual struggle for life opens the way for something finer than an individual scramble for survival. It will not bring any final solution of all problems, but it will help us on toward new problems that are on a higher level than the old.

Obviously we cannot wait to convert all the ruthless exploiters, the holders of money power, the grasping citizens everywhere. We must try some collective method of planning life to give more people a full chance to live.

If we go back over the rugged road of individualism, the contest for jobs will be fiercer, the competition in business will be more ruthless, and the antagonism between nations will indefinitely increase. All this is inevitable unless by some co-operative movements we regulate this rivalry and mitigate its fierceness and find a mutual way to protect our interests.

*Have we outgrown charity as a way of helping each other live?*

Under any form of society there will be enough misfortune to require the virtue of charity. The rôle of loving-kindness will always be indispensable in the drama of life; but henceforth a charitable disposition is not enough to offset the harshness of a competitive struggle.

Our fathers went to school in a little red schoolhouse on the village green. If there had occurred a fire in that style of building, it would have been proper to shout, "Everybody for himself!" and let the strong be charitable toward the weak. There were windows and doors enough on the ground level, so that if everybody rushed for an exit, safety could still be insured. This would not be so in a modern school building with three or four thousand pupils. It would be sure death there to shout "Fire!" and advise everybody to rush for an exit. A "stampede of individualists" would be hopeless. Such a

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situation requires not an individual disposition to seek safety, nor a charitable disposition to secure one's own safety first and then return to help the less fortunate victims in the fire; but a mutual, co-operative disposition toward marching out to a safety which could be shared by all.

We are in the grip of a unifying movement, manoeuvring us into a neighborhood despite all our resistance. God is not waiting for a mutual disposition to happen. His arrangement of the world is affecting us like a great necessity. Every economic and scientific advance works toward interdependence in spite of us. In no uncertain terms we are being shown what one of our economists has called "the futility of thinking that what one can do, all can do." If one person makes a profit from a roadside tea-room, why not have one in every house? If one farmer succeeds with potatoes, why not permit all farmers to plant potatoes the following year, until they glut the market and make it useless to harvest the crops? If one country has a tariff, why not all countries, until they strangle each other? If one nation prepares against all enemies for its own safety, why not all prepare against everybody else until the nations bankrupt themselves? There is some unifying activity in the universe, not under human control, which by the very logic of events is bringing this nonsense to judgment and teaching us the importance of a mutual disposition.

## 3. CONTROL BY NON-RESISTANCE

*What place is there for the principle, "Resist not evil"?*

It will help to clarify the matter if we recognize at the outset that there are *two problems* in handling a hostile disposition. There is the problem of *changing the disposition*, and the problem of *restraining or coercing the disposition when unchanged*. Most of our confused thinking comes from failure to distinguish these two problems.

A sample of this confusion is found in the conventional objection to non-resistance, which runs like this. If some violent man threatened your wife and children, would you not resist him? It is assumed that there is only one problem there and that resistance is the answer.

Consider the true incident of a husband who was facing that situation. He found that resistance was not the only resource and he was surprised to see how naturally one tried something else first. He was awakened early one morning by someone coming in the front door, which happened to be unlocked. In the lower hall he was confronted by a wild-looking individual, over six feet tall, with one arm, coat off, collar gone, hair on end and with a glittering eye like that of the Ancient Mariner, who gripped him by the shoulder and said, "This is my house." Just then the husband noticed that the man was

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drunk. Now any one knows that the way to handle a man ugly with drink is to get on the right side of him if you can. So the drunken man was asked where his room was, if this was his house. He pointed back toward the kitchen. "Good," said the husband, "my family is upstairs. Let me show you to your room." A moment later the invader appeared on the front stairs, looking for his coat. Politely and generously the husband offered to look for it, showed him to another comfortable seat on the front porch, and then locked the front door. This does not prove that a vicious bandit could be as easily handled, but it illustrates the two problems in handling a hostile disposition. The first problem is to see if you can change the disposition. Failing that, there arises the issue of restraining a disposition that is unchanged.

Jesus was talking simply about this first and most important problem when he said, "Resist not evil." He had a habit of talking on one point at a time, without bringing in qualifications that would divert attention. With perfect good sense he insisted that if you want to find the right side of a hostile disposition, you cannot do it by resisting meanness with meanness. You must appeal to the better side of a man. That is done by showing him your best instead of your worst.

This is what Jesus illustrated in those striking sayings about turning the other cheek and treating an enemy better than he treated you. These were not rules but

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suggestions of a principle which is absolute and final. You may resist and restrain evil by force, but that does not change the evil. Evil is really overcome only by the superior attraction of good. That attraction may fail, but nevertheless it is the only way to change a hostile disposition.

*How may you know whether a bad disposition is changeable?*

There is no way of telling without taking the risk. How changeable is the disposition of a Chinese bandit? A young American girl was teaching in a Chinese village that was about to be looted by a vicious bandit and his followers. That meant something worse than death to women in the town. This girl loaded some ponies with food and presents, and with a friend marched off to the bandit camp in the hills, walked untouched through the armed guard, befriended the chief, surprised him with kindness and fearless goodwill, and, like a good American, even persuaded him to pose for a photograph. She came away with a promise that her village would be unharmed, and the promise was kept. Nobody knows what good can do to evil until the risk is taken.

*What has non-resistance to do with religion?*

It is worth noting that men like Christ, who willingly take risks with love, are religious men. They believe



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that the influence which is released through a life of love is something far more effective in the end than physical force. They believe that they are giving themselves to the only power in the universe that can ever change a hostile disposition. They trust that they are instruments of the love of God, which may be opposed and crucified, but which through suffering becomes the one invincible power we know in changing the world. They go beyond cautious limits because they trust a form of influence that surprises human calculations.

### 4. ATTRACTION AND COERCION

*Must not evil be restrained by pressure?*

The problem of handling hostile dispositions, when friendliness and goodwill fail to change them, is not simple. The difficulty is that pressure may take so many forms, from kindly warning up the whole gamut to force and violence.

This at least may be taken as a basis, that *life as we know it in this universe is a balance between the forces of attraction and coercion*. The more we can be attracted toward what is best, the less we need to be coerced; and the less we are attracted, the more coercion becomes inevitable. However, this coercion can never do what the attraction does.

Some years ago the police force went on a strike in Boston, and the hoodlums and bandits of society, who

had been kept in restraint, came forth from hiding and became a threat to society. A lawyer, discussing the riot, tried to prove by this that society is ultimately based on force. Take the police away and order and safety disappear. But he forgot one-half of the facts. Suppose tomorrow you took out of Boston all the friendliness and love and excellence and mutual goodwill that attract people toward decent living. Imagine all that going on a strike. Life in Boston would dissolve into chaos and the police would run for their lives. Police cannot take the place of that. Both attraction and coercion work to keep us in line; but the coercion never changes dispositions. It only restrains them, forces them to be cautious, and at best makes them ready to change in the face of a necessity which may crush them unless they do.

God seems to have built this arrangement into the very scheme of things. If we are not attracted to keep the laws of health, nature begins to threaten us with a necessity which develops into pain and destruction. If we are not attracted out of selfishness, we begin to feel the threat of broken relationships that bid fair to isolate our life. When we are virtuous and law-abiding, it is partly because we are attracted by the good and partly because we know the threat of the law. Fewer people would still be conscientious about income-tax returns, if it became generally known that the law was not being strictly enforced on the worst offenders. In our political

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and economic life we are drawn by ideals, but this influence is balanced by the pressure of law and economic necessity which press us to consider others besides ourselves.

Jesus put his main stress on the attraction that alone can induce hostile dispositions to change; but he had an Old Testament training which had instilled into him the other truth that "God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He warned men that in contrast to the attraction of his way of life, there was the threat of another way that led to destruction. Life, as we know it in God's universe, is kept by a balance between attraction and coercion; and Jesus, with no other life than his own to risk, gave himself to reveal the love which alone can reduce the need of coercion.

### *Can world problems be solved without force?*

This balance of attraction and coercion is the real issue between the privileged and dispossessed classes all over the world. It is also the critical issue between nations. In the unjust order of life in which we all live, we have not been wont to show the brotherly spirit until we had to; and wherever we are slow to govern life by the attraction of that spirit, coercion in some form becomes inevitable.

Our position in this world struggle is like that of a motor car in fast traffic on a crowded one-way road. If

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you move too slowly, you hold up traffic until exasperation increases behind you. If you go slower still, the exasperation grows into pressure that jars you. If you become obstinate against being hurried and start to back against the pressure, the coercion will take the form of violence which will be unpleasant for all concerned.

*The real question is not whether there will be coercion, but what form the coercion will take.*

### 5. MORAL BACKWARDNESS OF GROUPS

*Why is the way of Christ so apparently ineffective?*

It often puzzles us that after 1900 years of Christian teaching we have such an unattractive world. Fancy a man from Mars watching our racial prejudice, our industrial life, our political life in New York and Chicago and Washington, or our international relations—how much unselfish goodness would attract him in those areas? The sentimentalist dodges the issue by saying that we never have really tried Christianity. But what keeps us from trying it? There seems to be plenty of kindness and goodwill and neighborliness among individuals everywhere. The trouble is *we cannot make a large group of people behave as well as an individual*. As a nation or a class our life is always more pagan than our life as individuals.

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*Why should our national or class morality be below the standard of the individuals?*

Because one hundred and fifty million people in America, for instance, cannot love and understand sixty or seventy million people in Japan in the same way one American could come into friendship with one Japanese. Three students from Japan once visited a university in America and met with a company of students and faculty in a private house. In an hour of frank discussion over delicate national issues, an impression of friendliness was created which was far ahead of the impression either nation as a whole makes on the other.

If all the people of a nation really agreed to trust unselfish love, so that they would scrap their fleets and armies, and live with Christ's devotion to the service of all, that nation would probably be the safest one on earth; but no country can yet muster all its people to love like that. We have too little intimacy with multitudes everywhere, who are separated from us by the width of the ocean. That is why the action and feeling of one nation toward another will always be on a lower level than the relations between single individuals.

Lord Birkenhead of England once said in a political institute, "I for myself cherish no delusions as to the only function which the American government is called upon to discharge. Their primary and indeed their only

duty is to the American people." The government, by its very nature as guardian of the people, tends to protect its subjects' interests first. When those interests demand co-operation with others, then approaches will be made toward co-operative movements; but as far ahead as we can see, that will not rise to a personal basis of love. Pressure of some sort will be at least in the background as a threat.

*Why is brotherly love so difficult between the two extremes of society within a nation?*

This unattractive side of group life is particularly evident in the relations between the privileged and underprivileged classes. Some personal acquaintances which cross these class lines seem pleasant enough and are invaluable, but they often blind us to the real situation. The system we all live and profit by weighs on the underprivileged with an impersonal cruelty that is not offset by personal friendships.

The Labor Commissioner of New York, in studying conditions during the post-war depression, found that back of the cheap clothes and cheap vegetables and cheap everything we purchased, there were young girls, under working age, employed for twelve hours a day, seven days a week. Some cases were discovered where one dollar was payment in full for expert garment work for two weeks with overtime. No one dared complain for

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fear of losing employment. Extreme, yes; but the workers of the world have for years been battling their way out of this exploitation, against relentless opposition from the world above them. From somewhere in the controlling class has come this impersonal pressure, backed by law and police, hindering the workers' rise from the borderline of existence. This impression of what the upperworld is doing to them is more powerful than individual contacts. The farther down the pay scale you go, the more impersonal and relentless this group impression is felt to be.

This explains that striking contrast between the way of thinking in the upper and lower extremes of society. In a book called *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, by Reinhold Niebuhr, we are given a classic analysis of this contrast. The upper group think of themselves as individuals, while to the lower group they appear as an impersonal mass whose control makes life hard and bitter. The upper group think of nice people they know in their circle and of individual kindness and fairness to one another. The lower group discount all this individual morality because it has no effect on the pressure which is their main experience of the crowd above them. The well-to-do think of converting individuals to goodness and brotherliness. The dispossessed have no delusions on this point. They are not anxious to wait until people are converted to absolute love. They mistrust

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religion and morality, and would meet the power that presses on them with power which they can wield to match it. Those who have, emphasize individual rights and freedom and privilege. Those who have not, feel they must rise together if they rise at all; and are ready to subordinate private rights and freedom to group action for the common welfare, relying on the force of economic necessity to break up the present order.

Whether we like these facts of social life or not, they are here to deal with. In these relations, where as groups we are not yet able to show the attraction of love, some form of restraint or pressure is bound to emerge.

### 6. KINDS OF COERCION

*Is there any force that can make hostile people friendly?*

Of course not. That is why Jesus was so interested in methods that would reduce the necessity of coercion. Handling people by pressure is always inadequate because it never brings out the best that is in them. If, in the present state of the world, some pressure and control are required, it is of the utmost importance that we *favor those kinds of coercion which invite co-operation*, for some forms of compulsion only increase antagonism.

The point becomes clear in such a homely incident as occurred one summer when two boys were attempting



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to train a calf to work in a yoke like an ox. The animal resented the idea at first, refused to move, and became more obstinate when pushed from behind. Whereupon the boys resorted to twisting his tail. Though this produced results for a time, it became more and more dangerous as the tail became sore, and finally failed because of the kicking habit which ensued. When it became evident that these methods were bringing out the worst instead of the best, a halter was put on the calf, and one boy took control of the rope while the other walked ahead holding a green apple in front of the calf's nose. Only enough pressure was exerted on the halter to keep the calf where he could feel the attraction of the apples. Little by little the animal found where his real interest lay—in co-operation. They were reaching the point where even the halter was not required—when, unfortunately, the calf died of colic from eating too many green apples. Without pressing the analogy too far, this illustrates how important it is to use the forms of coercion that encourage co-operation in place of antagonism.

In the best homes we have abandoned the coercion of dominating authority. We try to use the sort of control that invites co-operation. In education the same is true; and everywhere in industry and community affairs we are experimenting with this technique.

From this point of view we can understand why the world is becoming interested in ways of exerting pres-

sure less violent than war. Various forms of non-co-operation, such as the strike and boycott, may cause ill feeling and injury; still, unlike war, their intention may not be to injure but to induce co-operation. In the hands of Gandhi, in India, we have seen how powerful this weapon is when coupled with non-resistance and the motive of love. He claims that it enables people struggling for justice and freedom to fight a system without resentment toward personalities. In the struggle for justice its purpose is not malicious and enables one to prove his good will by accepting suffering without seeking to inflict any. It leaves no such aftermath as the fearful destruction of war, involves no such expense, and since it avoids direct killing it does not arouse such blind hates. It offers more opportunity for tempers to cool, and, far better than war, can encourage the chances of co-operation. With a right motive, in a good cause, and with supporters who can keep at it in the face of death itself, without retaliation or complaint, it tends to undermine the opposition, arouse public sentiment, and make it difficult for any one to continue endlessly to imprison or slaughter non-resisting people defending their honest rights. However, it is a difficult weapon to control; and it may become an economic threat which imperils the innocent with the guilty, until it brings on the effect of the terrors of war. In various forms, like non-recognition and the economic boycott, it may in the future be-

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come the last resort of nations to avoid war; but it will always be dangerous in these larger areas of action because of wrong motives that enter in. The best we can say is that it is a method which can be improved and refined as the world becomes more interdependent, while war can never be improved.

*What hope is there that non-violent methods of control will increase in use?*

The growing interdependence of the world is lending these methods power that was never possible in the world before. In the days of the Armada, when each nation was a law unto itself, the elements of control which have come with interdependence were not there to use. It is sentimental to assume that we cannot outgrow war and violence until we have brotherly love ruling on earth. If we cannot attain immediate and universal brotherly love, we can still experiment with better and better forms of coercion which invite co-operation and open doors for the attraction of friendliness.

### 7. WAR, THE OUTLAW

*Has not war ever been a source of good to the world?*

The good that war has done in the past is often used to justify it today, but the argument has less and less

force as the years pass. Killing people has always been the worst method of settling disputes, but when solutions by peaceful means are rejected, situations develop in which the one choice left seems to lie between the wickedness of war and the continuance of some other wrong that is judged even worse. In the days when men were equipped with simpler fighting methods, the destruction they caused in a struggle, though bad enough, was nothing compared with the results of modern warfare. It was possible to see that the gain from war was more than the loss.

As war becomes more and more destructive, the loss may outweigh the gain. In the World War, so far as we can see, that is what happened. The victors lost just as much as the vanquished, perhaps more, and the whole world suffered an incalculable setback for which there could be no reparations—all over a quarrel that had to be patched up at a council table, where it could have been better settled by intelligent men in the first place. War is the one method of handling people which can never be civilized. The more we improve it, the more destructive we make it. When it receives the assistance of science, it becomes a Frankenstein that devours its makers and threatens to annihilate civilization. Henceforth it must be more and more an unredeemable outlaw.

*Can preparedness for war be justified?*

Only to this extent: if you are to go into a killing game, you must be equipped to kill; otherwise some one better equipped will kill you.

This is so simple that we are apt to take it for the whole truth, when it is only part of the truth. There are decided limits to what military equipment can do. If a lawn mower equips you for mowing your lawn, that does not mean that such a machine is the best instrument for cutting your hair. Today we are not simply facing the question of fighting. We are even more concerned with the way to prevent the fight from coming at all. Military equipment may enable you to fight, but that does not mean it is the best instrument to prevent fighting.

There is the point where people begin to think in circles. Lord Grey, who was at the centre of the stage when the World War began, confessed, when it was all over, that the world conflict taught one unmistakable truth, that preparedness does not prevent war. That had been demonstrated; the European nations had been prepared to the limit. They were so prepared that they could not deliberate more than twenty-four hours before precipitating war, just because they were so afraid of each other's preparation.

We know, of course, that armed force will restrain

insignificant and backward nations, as a police force restrains criminals. For a long time to come civilization will protect itself by some sort of armed police force, whether we like it or not; but our vast competitive armaments are not designed to restrain the weaker, backward nations. We do not use a triphammer to crack eggs. The preparedness which is costing the billions has in mind the big rival nations—the “advanced” nations—and combinations of them. Such preparation will certainly help us fight them, if that is all there is to do; but it will not prevent war, which is the one thing we most want to do. And there is a reason which is something more than a pacifist theory.

*Why does preparedness fail to prevent war?*

Because of a law of nature which we might call the law of ill will. *Ill will creates more ill will.* That law is the law of the universe. It is just as fixed as the law that friction produces heat. We naïvely assume that wars are a matter of chance—somebody happens to start them—but it is not so simple as that. Wars come by the working out of the law of ill will. Suspicion arouses suspicion. Ill will begets ill will. Alliances produce alliances. *Preparedness promotes preparedness.* This is not chance; it is a law. The more we prepare against each other, the more afraid we are of each other. The more we suspect each other, the less willing we are to trust scraps of

paper. The preparedness ceases to be a restraint and develops a psychology which tends to precipitate action before some opponent gets the advantage.

So long as the world lives under the operation of this law of ill will, no ingenuity, no preparedness however vast can ever prevent, in the nature of things, the working out of ill will in the direction of annihilation. Despite all our efforts to the contrary, we have been coming, decade by decade, steadily on in that direction. We have tried for nineteen hundred years, especially since the days of chivalry, to ameliorate this process of war by making polite rules about what men should do when they are killing each other. When the World War broke out, all these human rules came up against this law of the universe—that the genius of ill will stimulates the genius of ill will—and the whole work of centuries went down like a house before an avalanche. We cannot legislate against a law of the universe.

## *What is the basic principle of peace?*

Another law of nature which could be described as the law of good will. *Only good will creates good will.* It does not always seem to work. The exceptions often deceive us and incline us to forget the law. Sunshine and rain may not always produce a crop, but without light and water crops are not created. Nothing but good will ever has or ever can create good will.

## AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

For the future our real hope lies in our equipment for releasing good will and understanding, together with such pressure as will tend to make enemies see the advantage of being friends. There is plenty of individual good will in the world to stop war tomorrow; but it cannot express itself in the present arrangements of our public life. It requires more and new equipment for bringing nations together, not occasionally, but continuously, to work over their mutual problems in the open. Every movement to reduce armaments helps to diminish suspicion, and practice in using our equipment for counsel can strengthen our confidence in one another. The two movements must go along together; neither can succeed alone.

*Why is progress for peace so slow and disappointing?*

A historian, who has been adviser to the State Department in Washington, has said that the pattern for international relations will follow the pattern of life in the nations. That is significant and sadly true. Up to now the pattern of life in nations has been that of competition for private wealth, and as a consequence our international life is based on competition for wealth. This can never afford a basis of unity. Movements are everywhere afoot to plan the life of a nation for welfare rather than wealth, so that men will be paid for their



## MORAL BEARINGS

contribution to the common good, and more common wealth can be used for common advantages, which only a minority could afford alone. As this pattern is worked out, the basis of international relations may shift gradually from wealth to welfare. That opens the way for unity, where each national culture can thrive by the peculiar gifts it can furnish the world, and the resources of nature can be intelligently guarded as the wealth we all need for living together on this earth, which is our common home. We have come at last to see that the technique for international peace must begin with the order of life at home.

### 8. MORAL BEARINGS

*Are we guided by the moral or the practical point of view?*

Both views have their place, but everything depends on their order. The former is what keeps us *free to see*, and the latter should indicate the next steps in the direction of our moral vision.

We have been submerged in the closing years of a bourgeois age when the economic interest has prevented men from seeing beyond the ends of their noses. They have taken their theory of navigation from the dismal science of the "economic man," a mythical being with one eye forever focused on the favorable chance for

profit, possession and power. On the material level the result has been efficiency equal to that of Aladdin's miraculous lamp. Nevertheless all our intelligence has led us to the edge of doom, when devoting itself to the favorable chance for profit and power. We can take to ourselves the confession of a certain lawyer who said he had intelligence enough not to make a fool of himself twice in exactly the same way, but he still found he could make a fool of himself in an infinite variety of ways.

The only way to be in such a practical world and not of it, is to commit yourself to your moral bearings first, and so keep yourself free to see. When you sail a boat it would be fatal to steer with your eye confined to the weathervane at the top of the mast, for by just following the favorable chance of the changing winds you would find yourself, with all your intelligence, in among the rocks on a lee shore, or lost at sea. You must first get your bearings from the compass, which is held invariable by the electrical constitution of the universe. Then if the wind is contrary and you cannot steer immediately where you want to go, you will watch the weathervane to make the next favorable tack, now here, now there, while you stay committed to your compass bearings all the time.

Get your moral bearings first! Reduce a situation to a moral issue, and then you will be free to see where

some practical tack can make for progress in a right direction.

For instance, there is a moral issue where the freedom of democracy is threatened. From the bourgeois point of view of the economic man, freedom means the liberty to profit without limit, with government keeping its hands off. It is a different story from the point of view of millions with no chance to work, and of sixty-odd million more who live in daily fear of unemployment in a land of unlimited wealth. What use to them is a political vote in a free democracy, when that vote gives no control over their right to work, which is the right to live? A recent study has revealed that 200 industrial firms, with their 2000 directors, control our industrial world and the right to work. When that control is in the hands of collective wealth, where the individual worker's political right to vote is helpless to reach it, you no longer have a real democracy. You are on the way to a class struggle, because freedom to work has been lost for the sake of freedom to own and profit. There is a moral issue here, around which a great struggle is gathering. We have to decide whether ownership or workmanship shall be the ruling factor in self-government. The methods of that struggle are technical, but we will see how to use the methods only when we get our moral bearings first.

Again there is a moral issue in the familiar claim

that you must be patriotic and be ready to die for your country. True enough; but you must be free to see that patriotism does not mean dying for the armament makers' profit. We have learned at last what these wholesale murderers have been doing; with aviation companies, shipyards, and armament firms, interlocked in great combines that defy national boundaries; with holding companies and banks and investors involved in the intricate support of it all, and, as we shall soon see, no doubt, a press subtly controlled. By spreading war scares in one country the armament business can be set going in another.

Henceforth we must all be free to see that we should think twice when governments and patriotic societies tell us that, to save the country, we must increase this ghastly load of armaments. It is not a patriotic but a moral question, whether any government has a right to ask a young man to give his life in war until this armament and war-supplies business has been removed from the hands of those who will profit by the death of their fellows. When men say you must support the Constitution when your service is required, you will do so provided first you can stand committed to an older, invariable constitution which God has written in the moral structure of society. Be not deceived. You can serve your country best when you take your moral bearings first!

## EPILOGUE

### THE FREE SPIRIT

*In a managed world, how can we preserve the freedom of the human spirit?*

If we think of people as separate atoms, perpetually bumping into each other in a clash of material interests, expecting therefore to be "collected" into a group and controlled by intelligence that will balance everybody's interests to produce a common welfare, then we are headed in a direction where we will have more and more rule by force. How to keep the spirit of individuals free to think new thoughts, to acquire individuality and uniqueness, to criticize authorities and make way for change, will be an increasingly serious problem.

It seems unavoidable that there must be more management in the realm of material interests, for it has been proved that when one group prospers at the expense of another group, neither prospers in the end. The pressure for management in this field is so tremendous that it tends to spread control over the total life of the people of a nation. In trying to manage the world, we are tempted to manage the minds and spirits of men. That is fatal and will lead to an eruption which always recurs where freedom of the human spirit is too long imprisoned.

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If we are to learn to live in a managed world, we must recognize the fact, around which this whole book is written, that we are finally responsible to something beyond human intelligence. We can trust the management of man by man only when we first trust something beyond him, which has never left him strictly alone to live by his own devices. There has always been something beyond his power, beyond his calculation, beyond his control, beyond his ability to create, beyond his foresight and comprehension, beyond opposition, beyond his dreams. He has never been able to do just as he pleased, as though left completely alone. It is when men have thought they were left to themselves to do as they pleased that they have had the surprise of their lives.

Men should, of course, be mindful of their best interests as individuals and groups, but they have ever been famous for being unmindful of them. Whether they do not see far enough or whether some immediate interest blinds them from seeing a better one, they have perpetually used intelligence to support self-interest, and made fools of themselves by doing what was exactly opposed to their welfare. We can learn to follow our own interests only because something beyond our judgment keeps confronting us with consequences that make us change our mind. We cannot even trust the state or the common will of multitudes of people to define what

is good for us, because something beyond our combined wisdom is forever making us aware of new ranges of good which we had not thought of before, and precipitating a conflict between our imperfect notion of life and some better way to live.

Men should also be intelligent and reasonable. Yet think of the things men have thought were intelligent and reasonable! Our human intelligence has backed to the limit all the things in human history that proved wrong. Our ideas of the universe have always been failing; our systems of government, our social orders, have always been failing, one after another; and we know that any system we invent tomorrow will fail in its time because there is something in the nature of this living universe absolutely beyond our judgment to which we are finally responsible, and which is always precipitating a conflict between what we think and something better that we ought to think.

Men should further learn to renounce self-will, but they will never do that if they think they are simply to give in to the self-will of other people. We renounce self-will only where we feel the claim of some inexpressible excellence which we gladly give our lives to express. This is not just *our higher will*, for it is always beyond our best so far that it keeps correcting our loftiest ideals.

We cannot really have faith in human nature by itself,

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after we have seen what it has done; but we can have faith in human nature connected with that something forever and finally beyond it—never leaving men alone, always above dictators, above political leaders, above business men, economists, scientists, educators,—King of kings, and Lord of lords.” This, through many misunderstandings, men have called God.

This higher relationship, however described, is what produces *the truly conscientious man*, without whom the prospect of managing mankind is hopeless. The American dream of freedom of development for every individual can only be realized through individuals with a conscience. Our forefathers, with their bringing up, assumed that there would be a supply of conscientious men and women who would act like a “leaven in the lump,” and by their influence mitigate the mad scramble of individualists who might threaten to turn the country into chaos. We have rather let them down on this matter of conscience. We have proved that, without it, freedom of the individual leads straight to control by a piratical minority or by force. If life loses this higher relationship which generates the disciplined conscience, then we must be more and more disciplined by the state. There is no other alternative. Cleverness in manipulating human relations can never be a substitute for conscience, because it tends to sharpen ingenuity in evasions of the law.



## THE FREE SPIRIT

To prevent human life from being overmanaged, there must be multiplied among us the conscientious people, who, while using ingenuity in the control of men, are kept in line with that higher will which ever summons their best in the direction of the best possible. Such people have an effect which is never measured by numbers. They have the power of helping many to want what ought to be wanted. A leader who gives expression to the genuine spirit of love, which begets trust, may modify the rigors of control beyond all calculation. He becomes, in the words of a Hebrew proverb, "an interpreter, one among a thousand,"—*one man who makes many see.*

Over thirty years ago a professor of sociology wrote a little book called "Social Control," in which he said that society cannot do without the "élite." By that he meant the people who can see farther than the crowd into what we really want, and feel responsible for making it attractive. The élite are not only the leaders. They are also the followers, who, in lesser ways, make available a vast amount of good will that reduces the need of coercion; and who also furnish a supply of right sentiment in controversies where they may be bystanders, able to be indignant at the faults of others, no matter how faulty they may be themselves.

In our reliance upon the sweeping movements that come by mass pressure, we must never forget the su-

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preme importance of the quiet, leavening effect of these innumerable interpreters, one among a hundred, one among a thousand, one among the millions, who make many see. We may well believe the words of a spiritual leader of the generation past who said: "To be an interpreter—to be one among a thousand, to whom it is given to think out some thought which others have not understood; to live out some truth which others have not grasped; to find out some power which others have not known; to hold out some light which others have not perceived; and so to make the meaning of life clearer and the way of life brighter for some of the nine hundred and ninety-nine—this is the highest of all callings."

## ***ACKNOWLEDGMENTS***



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express to the following publishers my thanks for permission to draw (in Chapters V, VIII, IX, XIII) upon the substance of material which I prepared for a chapter in each of the four books listed below:

Harper & Bros.:

*Preaching in the New Era*, edited by Elmore McNeill McKee

*What Can Students Believe?*, edited by Elmore McNeill McKee.

The Pilgrim Press:

*Sermons I Have Preached to Young People*, edited by Sidney A. Weston.

The University of Chicago Press:

*Religion in Higher Education*, edited by Milton C. Towner.

R. R. W.











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